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#45

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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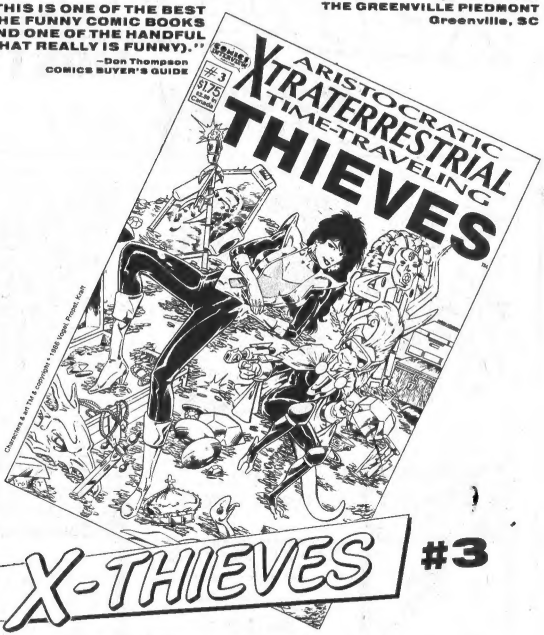

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cover conceived by:
MOEBIUS

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UP FRONT

What do you want, when you have everything? What do you do, when you can do anything?

Questions, questions, flooding through the minds of Marvelites everywhere. And nary an answer to be found.

But, what of that? As **John Lennon** once said, "It comes in sentence cesspool, Gatwick Airport."

On the other handbag, I mean to say, we're damn near the Nineties, and already I can hear the roaring as if from afar (but all too near).

As **Harlan Ellison** himself might say, "this is no joke, folks, we live in interesting times." (It's the Chinese curse.)

In the past five years, the comic-book industry (such as it is) has mightily metamorphosized. There was a time when it behooved us to frequently feature Marvel or DC on the cover of COMICS INTERVIEW. Nowadays, the independents have arisen, and in the direct sales market, where competition is head-to-head and on equal footing, such is no longer the case. The great thing about the comics field is that rather than being bureaucratically stifled into the status quo by union or government, the free market (such as it is) prevails. There was a day when DC ruled almighty in the comics marketplace; Marvel was merely an upstart, easily laughed off. Now, Marvel rules almighty — but let's not laugh off the contenders.

Remember, you read it here first folks.

After all, McDonald's wasn't always McDonald's. Once, it was just a hamburger stand.

-Dave K

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"I'm not a mystic, I have no special

MOEBIUS

A groundbreaking contract was recently signed between the world-renowned French artist Jean Moebius Giraud and Marvel, which will launch a full-color series of six graphic albums featuring: new Moebius; never-before-seen-in-America Moebius; and seldom-seen-anywhere Moebius; all wrapped between six brand-new covers.

The unique aspect of this contract is the amount of artistic control it cedes to Moebius' company, Starwatcher Graphics, Inc. Marvel has assured Starwatcher that they'll be able to match the high standards of French reproduction. If they don't — Moebius can back out of the deal at any step of the way!

This series promises to be a hallmark in American comics, guaranteed to spread the reputation of Jean Giraud well outside the ranks of those of us who already know his work from HEAVY METAL, METAL HURLANT (which he co-created) and PILOTE. Apart from his outstanding science-fiction and fantasy graphics, Moebius has lately embarked upon motion picture work, where he's designed costumes, drawn storyboards and created visual concepts for such films as ALIEN, TRON and the upcoming George Lucas/Ron Howard fantasy, WILLOW.

By the time you put this interview down, you'll be recovering from a fantastic journey through the hidden corridors of mind of the world's most devoted artist — a man who lives, breathes, thinks and (as you'll soon see) even eats for the sake of his work — twenty-four hours a day.

I caught up to him at the San Diego Comic Convention, where he was drawing non-stop for a steady stream of demanding admirers...

MARK BORAX: *It's a lot of work, signing people's drawings!*

MOEBIUS: Yes, I started to do that in Europe a few years ago — oh, not a few years ago — many years ago!

MARK: *I hope your voice is loud enough for the microphone. You speak softly!*

MOEBIUS: Softly. *(Laughter.)* Yes, I'm soft.

MARK: *So you're used to doing conventions in Europe?*

MOEBIUS: Yes, there are a lot of conventions which started in France, I think, around 1970; and I was in the first convention in Angouleme and — before that convention — in Lucca, Italy. But I didn't know about here in America. When did you start the convention here in San Diego?

MARK: *1970, I believe. It keeps getting bigger every year.*

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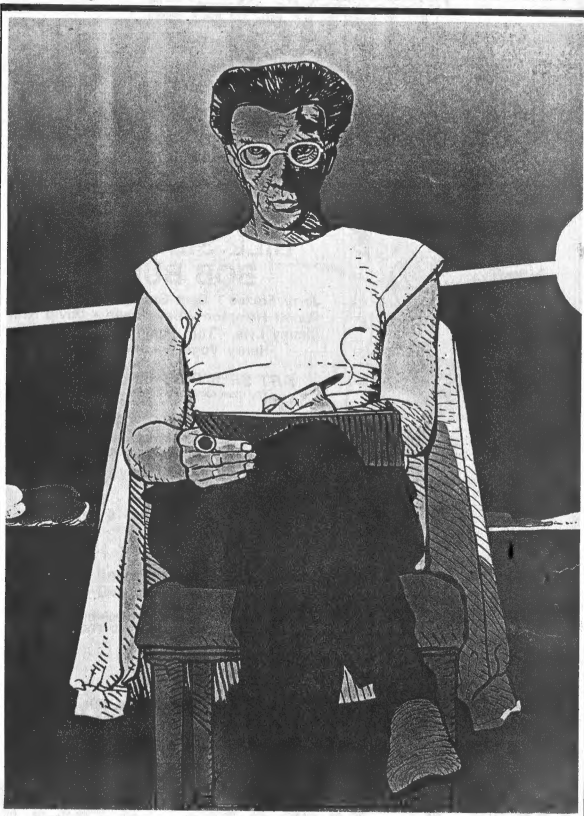

The French artist's recent self-portrait.

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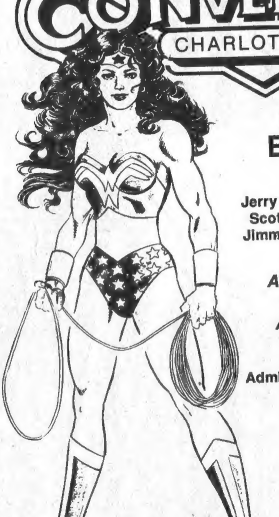

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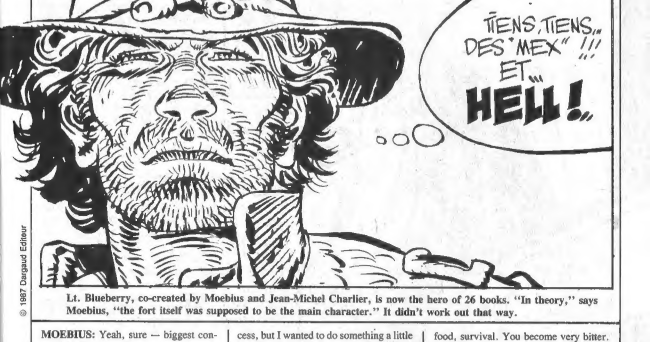
"You have to think about survival."



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Lt. Blueberry, co-created by Moebius and Jean-Michel Charlier, is now the hero of 26 books. "In theory," says Moebius, "the fort itself was supposed to be the main character." It didn't work out that way.

MOEBIUS: Yeah, sure — biggest convention I ever saw. Maybe Angouleme is a little bit bigger.

MARK: *It looks like a nightmare to me, to see you behind the counter, and somebody pushes a page at you and says, "Draw Blueberry!"*

MOEBIUS: Today, especially, it was like this.

MARK: *You have to be creative on the demand of all these people?*

MOEBIUS: Yes, it's a good exercise, in two senses. The first one, drawing, and the second, to be able to give — generousity. But also — not to give too much! If you give too much to one, the other — frustrated.

MARK: *And there's nothing left inside you to give to the other?*

MOEBIUS: Yeah.

MARK: *How are American audiences responding to your work?*

MOEBIUS: Oh, very nicely. Like in Europe. It's like, this time, I've tried to do something soft and, uh, good quality. Something very human. So they see that in me, no matter the barrier of language.

MARK: *It seems like the audiences can relate very strongly to your work, though you're not an artist with big commercial success.*

MOEBIUS: No, I don't try.

MARK: *Because you don't want it?*

MOEBIUS: I don't want it, because when I started in France I had LT. BLUEBERRY, and it was the beginning of a big success, a big commercial success, but I wanted to do something a little bit more different. Out of the commercial ways. So spent my time between BLUEBERRY and that other production. With time, BLUEBERRY became, not a big success, but commercially viable. It can stay alive, maybe not the quantity, but the quality. So it becomes, maybe, a balance between **Moebius** and the other productions. But anyway, the other productions — nobody knows here — here people only know me as **Moebius**. The audience is not big but, like in France, the quality is here. Maybe it's more important.

MARK: *To do the quality?*

MOEBIUS: We start with the quality, and reach the quantity, step by step.

MARK: *If you could do the same stuff that you're doing now and have it become very commercially successful — would that be a goal?*

MOEBIUS: It's not a goal, but it's a possibility. When an artist starts to work he must be ready for two possibilities — to be rich and famous, or poor and unknown. And the two possibilities are very dangerous. The first one because, if you're well-known and rich you lose your, uh —

MARK: *Your drive?*

MOEBIUS: Your drive. You become fat and lazy. If you are poor and unknown you are not able to work.

MARK: *Because you have to think about food.*

MOEBIUS: Yes, you have to think about food, survival. You become very bitter.

MARK: *So you're trying to tread the balance in between?*

MOEBIUS: Yes. But I try to be ready for both. If I become poor and unknown, I must be able to do it without any bitterness — still able to survive. If I become rich and famous, I must be able to do it with control, in the money, and control, in the relation with the media — the audience.

MARK: *I don't think you have to worry about becoming poor and unknown —*

MOEBIUS: I don't know because... maybe I can choose that. If it's my way. What if I decide to stop working? I take a stick and I go in the woods — *(Laughter.)*

MARK: *What would you do with the stick?*

MOEBIUS: *(Gestures like using a walking stick)* Push my body. *(Laughter.)* I could decide to stop everything and go, like a hermit.

MARK: *It sounds like sometimes you get that urge.*

MOEBIUS: Sometimes, yes.

BOTH: *(Laughter.)*

MARK: *Do you work in bursts, and then have periods in between where you don't work — or do you work consistently?*

MOEBIUS: I work consistently, but sometimes with great fervor, big production. Sometimes it's difficult, but I must do it because I must do it — it's my program, you know. It's my professional discipline that comes to rescue me.

MARK: *Do you work seven days a week?*

"I'm trying to find new media."

Moebius frontispiece from the French edition of DARK KNIGHT.

MOEBIUS: Yes.
MARK: *When was the last day that you didn't work?*
MOEBIUS: Uh, yesterday, because I was at the convention — but it's like I worked.
MARK: *When I saw you, you were working hard!*
MOEBIUS: But for me it's not really work. You know, I'm sitting and I do drawings — in fact, it is work! You're right! I must consider that as work. Last time I didn't work, it was when I was in France. I stayed one month in France, and I was working every day! I was working every day! But I didn't work when I took the plane from France. Because, on the plane, I had no table to work on. No paper, nothing.
MARK: *You were slacking off!*
MOEBIUS: Yeah, yeah. *(Laughter.)* They don't have room for people who want to work on the plane!
MARK: *We'll have to write the airlines.*
MOEBIUS: NO, NO, NO! Please don't do it — it's my only moment I don't work, when I take the plane!
MARK: *You don't want to lose that.*
MOEBIUS: But you know, for me it's not really a problem because I don't know, really, what is work. When I draw, when I'm doing something beautiful, it's not work — it's play. It's work, but it's *real* work. The kind of work that makes you happy. Like a cowpuncher, or like a sailor, or a concert pianist.
MARK: *There's joy in your work.*
MOEBIUS: Yes! It's gotten completely holy. Sometimes it's hard — like life. *(Laughter.)* Nothing is completely even. On that planet.
MARK: *Is a lot of your work thinking about what you're going to do next — or do you just get in there and do it, and see what happens?*
MOEBIUS: I just start, and I don't know what will happen. Sometimes, yes, I'm thinking when I draw. I'm doing a story — the continuation of a book I made last year — and I have many ideas, and I think about those ideas always, all the time. Not all the time, but sometimes I spend maybe twenty minutes thinking: I *see* the story, and that moment, if somebody tries to speak to me, I don't hear. It's very strange.
MARK: *When you start out and you put down some lines on a piece of paper, do you already have a feeling of what you want to do — or do you sometimes just let your hand work, and then think afterwards?*
MOEBIUS: It's feedback — very fast! — between my hand travelling on the paper and my mind making decisions. Small

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"I also do martial art — important."

decisions, like a computer, doing many operations in a few time.

MARK: *Do you have ambitions to try any new media, or are you happy working with the media you've explored so far?*

MOEBIUS: I'm trying to find new media, because the media gives the shape — not completely, but it gives the direction. If you work for comics, it's not the same as if you work for a book or an illustration. If you do a portrait of somebody in a room, you say "Don't move!"; it's different than if you go to the country, if you try to do a landscape. If you have a sheet of paper, if you try to do an etching, if you have a big surface — different media change completely your exploration. Now I would like to try everything. I would like to try to paint with oil. I'm learning airbrush. I'm always curious of new techniques.

MARK: *Would you try things outside of painting?*

MOEBIUS: I would like to do sculpture, but I'm afraid, because it's very difficult. I did music for years — I gave up, because it's too difficult.

MARK: *What were you playing?*

MOEBIUS: Guitar. Piano, too. Drums. Bass.

MARK: *A lot!*

MOEBIUS: Yeah, a lot — but very bad!

BOTH: *(Laughter.)*

MOEBIUS: I liked the guitar the best. I do also martial art — *t'ai chi* — very important, a kind of creation with the body. Like dance.

MOEBIUS: Do you do that when you wake up?

MOEBIUS: Yes. Every morning I do *t'ai chi* and I swim in the ocean. Sometimes I run or play tennis. I think it's very important for an artist to be in good fitness.

MARK: *You're trying to make the vessel transparent, so the energy can flow through it.*

MOEBIUS: Something very important, too, is the work I do in food. The way to eat. I think it's 60% of what we are.

MARK: *So your nutrition — what goes into your body — is responsible for what comes out?*

MOEBIUS: Exactly. I'm working on that now, for thirteen years.

MARK: *Are you a vegetarian?*

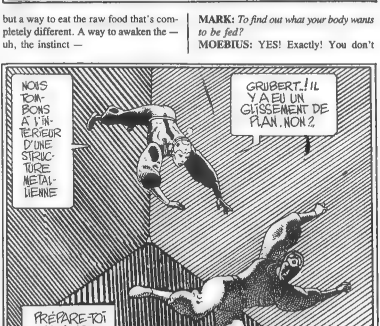
MOEBIUS: I was vegetarian for twelve years, and now, for one year, I'm still vegetarian — but I eat only raw food.

MARK: *Macrobiotic?*

MOEBIUS: No, because macrobiotic — it's not raw food. No, no, I'm only on raw food. It's a new technique that comes from Europe, called Instinctual Therapy, and it's something incredible. With raw food, but a way to eat the raw food that's completely different. A way to awaken the — uh, the instinct —

MARK: *To find out what your body wants to be fed?*

MOEBIUS: YES! Exactly! You don't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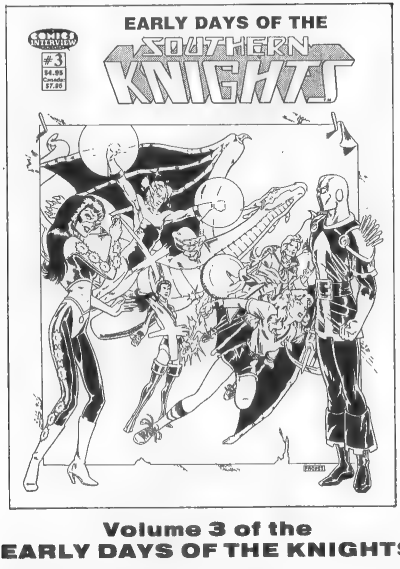

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"I was like everybody. Sex and violence."

need to have a menu. Your body gives you what you need, and the quantity you need. So, this is very important, because for the first time I'm able to trust my own instincts. I don't have to follow some fantasy, or some rules from somebody.

MARK: *Do you first have to reach a state of calm — within yourself — in order to find out what your body needs?*

MOEBIUS: No, anybody can do it. The only thing you need is to start. Once you start, your body changes very fast. In a few weeks, you awaken all the — your nose, and tongue.

MARK: *After the interview, I'd like to find out more about this.*

MOEBIUS: I'm thinking to do an English translation of the book about this Instinctual Therapy. Because I think many people are very aware about food here in America, and they are looking for the best diet. The best way to — be fit. I have been looking for many years, and I think I've almost found perfection. But I don't know if it's for everybody. I know people who have done it and it looks incredible.

MARK: *So by keeping your vessel as pure as you can, you get the best product.*

MOEBIUS: Not only pure and transparent, but sometimes strong, and, uh —

MARK: *Connected with your inner drives?*

MOEBIUS: Exactly. No toxins inside. This is very important, because it's the toxins that make the brain out of balance, that give all the bad habits, bad starts.

MARK: *It puts barriers between you and your art.*

MOEBIUS: Between you and you. *(Laughter.)* So you understand!

MARK: *Je comprends.*

MOEBIUS: In that way, I think the spiritual purpose is connected very directly to our material ways.

MARK: *No divisions. It wouldn't work to believe that you're spiritual, and then let the body go because you'd be neglecting the temple?*

MOEBIUS: Exactly. It's connected to the art, too — completely — because the art is only the signature of what you are.

MARK: *And your work seems to be revealing an increasing spiritual side?*

MOEBIUS: Yes, it looks like that. It's what I try. In the beginning, when I wanted to go that way, I was afraid to be, you know — kind of a religious artist, who works for an ideal. And I didn't want that! I wanted to express complete freedom of what I was.

MARK: *Were you worried about the way the world perceived you — or were you worried about the way you would see yourself?*

MOEBIUS: No, no, no! I was worried not to be in the truth.

MARK: *To follow a wrong path?*

MOEBIUS: Yes. Because of my desire to be good, you know. My desire to be a holy artist is really strong. Because before I was — *(laughter)* you know — I was like everybody. Sex and violence.

MARK: *Anguish.*

MOEBIUS: Yes, but I met people who gave me a little spirit, and I changed completely, and I turned myself to the higher directions. I thought a lot, because it was a problem — "What do you do now?"

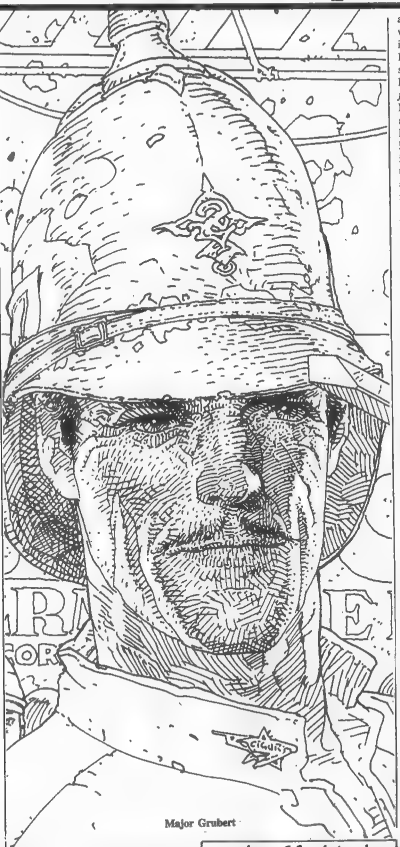
MARK: *Now that you can't draw violence and sex, what's left?*

MOEBIUS: Yes! Anyway, before, you know, I was not so stupid, I knew a little bit about the problem. The problem I had was to be free. Not to be involved in any direction that was not sincere. For example, in politics, or in any ideal. I wanted my art to be a direct expression of what I was inside. So I thought, do I want to be a sacred artist, who does only angels, like that — I can try to do that, because I'm able, I'm very clever with my drawing, I can try to do things like that. But it will not be the expression of my reality — it will be the expression of my *tension.*

MARK: *So your subject matter didn't have to turn spiritual, you could draw any subject matter, as long as inside you were spiritual?*

MOEBIUS: Yes. So I wanted to draw,

"It's hard to be a planet . . . It's



and I didn't know what it would be, but wanted to see the drawing coming, and for it to be beautiful — to be a higher level. Not giving orders to me to do that — you see what I mean?

MARK: *You wanted to direct your subject matter, rather than have it direct you?*

MOEBIUS: A little bit, but it's not exactly that.

MARK: *Maybe I missed your point.*

MOEBIUS: You know, when I was doing a drawing before — for example, twenty years ago, in complete freedom, a kind of automatic drawing — it was monsters! Now what I do — it's something more coming from my super conscious than my darkness. It's because I did work in my body, in my mind, in my spirit. Now when I work freely, without any purpose — something beautiful comes.

MARK: *Can you now draw a beautiful monster?*

MOEBIUS: No, because a monster cannot be beautiful.

MARK: *Will you draw monsters now?*

MOEBIUS: I could draw a monster. Now, I think I can, uh, go down again to the lower level, because I have the guarantee —

MARK: *Of coming back up!*

MOEBIUS: Yeah!

MARK: *So you can descend for awhile, look around, see what's there —*

MOEBIUS: Take what I need, and come back! (*Laughter.*)

MARK: *Do you look at your role as that of a pioneer — that you need to go into these other levels, in order to come back and show what it's like to the world, so they won't have to do it themselves? Like a shaman?*

MOEBIUS: Yes, maybe. Yes, yes, yes, sure! I think it's interesting to go to the lower level, because you find a kind of reality —

MARK: *— or even the higher level.*

MOEBIUS: Even the higher level. But it's difficult to do that, and to keep your integrity. You can get crazy. In both directions.

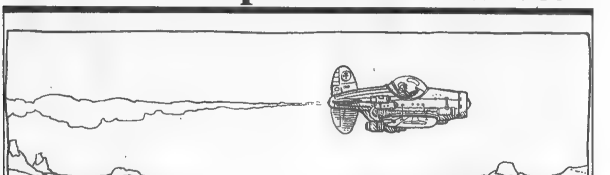
MARK: *Like William Blake, or the other metaphysical poets.*

MOEBIUS: It's not a place for the human. It's the place for gods, and other dimensions. If you go in that place, you must be as a reasonable human being, because if you don't go like that, it becomes like a curiousity. You show as a kind of freak.

MARK: *You want to go into the spirit, but you don't want to go too far in, because you want to have something to say to the people when you come back out.*

MOEBIUS: I care not to go so far, you know? I'm not a mystic, I have no special

hard for the planet to be alive."



ability to contact other dimensions. I know people who have that, and for them it's very difficult to keep the balance, to stay reasonable, to keep the contact with the other dimensions and with the rest of the world.

MARK: *Like Edgar Cayce, in the States, years ago?*

MOEBIUS: Yes. Sometimes they are prophets, and they become big big people. But in general they lose their humanity, their mental health. Or they become healers. I don't know if it's good for humanity, though. Humanity needs to go further not only with the people who are strange, but with everything. Not just with people who have a gift — the way must be for everybody. For the businessman, for the worker, for the people. Through dreams we can go very far, but we must be able to come back.

MARK: *We don't want to live in an opium fantasy?*

MOEBIUS: Exactly. It's why I work very hard on my diet, my exercise, my wife and family, my children, with my friends, and also in the control and exploitation of my work, as commercial director. I have my own company — I try to have control in *all* the lines. All the lines! From my sexual life, my professional life, financial, nutritional, mental. I try to know about the sciences — biology, physics, metaphysics. I study religion, and I try to have the contact in myself — meditation with the higher levels, to God. All those lines — and it's very difficult! Sometimes I lose — but life becomes very interesting.

MARK: *It's tough being a human being in the 21st Century.*

MOEBIUS: It's hard to be a planet. It's hard for the planet to be alive.

MARK: *There's a lot of stress.*

MOEBIUS: We are the planet, you know. You are not only a human being, you are a planet. Like when you see a bee, you see the hive. You understand?

MARK: *No, explain a bit.*

MOEBIUS: A bee is not an individual.

MARK: *I see, when you look at one bee — you see all bees. When you look at one human — you see a planet.*

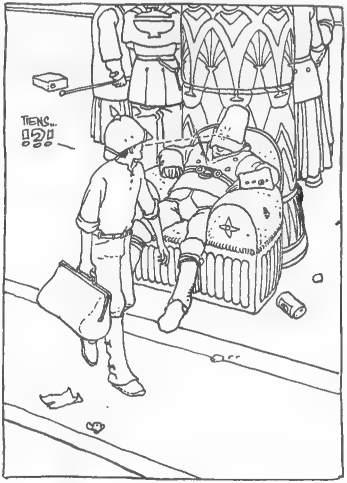
MOEBIUS: Yes!

MARK: *Talking about controlling your art, I understand you've just made an exciting deal with Marvel Comics — do you want to discuss it?*

MOEBIUS: Sure.

MARK: *Are you worried that with the translation of your French work into English, for Marvel Comics, that the art might suffer?*

MOEBIUS: Yes, that's why, in the contract, we asked for control of the translation, and we will do that with **Jean Marc Lofficier** and his wife — she is American — in order to have something very good. Almost perfect. Through Marvel, I think, is a very good deal, because it's a fair ex-



"They have a position in the psychic plane."

change — they give me the opportunity to be known by more people in America, and in exchange, I give to Marvel to open their production to another level. More adult.

MARK: *Which of your works will we see translated?*

MOEBIUS: All my work as "**Moebius**." First novels I made, short stories, like "Is Man Good?" to the "Airtight Garage". And some new stories I'm doing right now.

MARK: *Stories you're doing just for English versions?*

MOEBIUS: No, no — if I do something, it's automatically published in French, because I have my own company in Ardena, France.

MARK: *You've been living in the United States for a couple of years now?*

MOEBIUS: Yes.

MARK: *What made you decide to move here?*

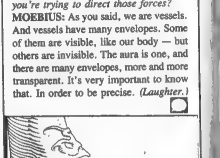
MOEBIUS: The occasion was because I wanted to do a movie, INTERNAL TRANSFER, an animation — but the movie is waiting a little bit, because we have to find money. You know, when I say I want to have control, it's not thorough control — it's that I want to understand what's happened. But I don't decide, always, what I will do. Things come. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's not so good. When it's no good, I say no. But sometimes it looks no good — but it's good!

MARK: (Laughter.) *And you're not the one who knows. Does it take your wife, or somebody else sometimes, to point it out?*

MOEBIUS: Yes, but also, sometimes something looks good — and it's not. But I try to understand what's happened, always. Not only in the sense of commercial or artistic, or aesthetic — all those planes are good — but I try to integrate my understanding in all planes. So when something happens on all the levels — and the meeting with Marvel is some thing that happens on all the levels — it came because I met **Jean-Marc Lofficier.** I work with him, his wife Randy, and my wife Claudine. We met, the two couples met, and it's a very good combination, because they are fans of **Moebius**, they are fans of American comics — they know everything about American comics and French comics, about movies. They are writers. And Jean-Marc knows everything about managing — he is incredible. The encounter with them enriched my position. Because of that we work with Marvel. The situation, with Claudine and me, and Jean-Marc and Randy, it's a kind of a strange encounter — not only commercial, in the dimension of art, because we became friends, but also in the psychic dimension, because they have a position in the psychic plane, very strong. All the planes are involved.

MARK: *The forces came together and you're trying to direct those forces?*

MOEBIUS: As you said, we are vessels. And vessels have many envelopes. Some of them are visible, like our body — but others are invisible. The aura is one, and there are many envelopes, more and more transparent. It's very important to know that. In order to be precise. *(Laughter.)*



"We just signed the contract!"

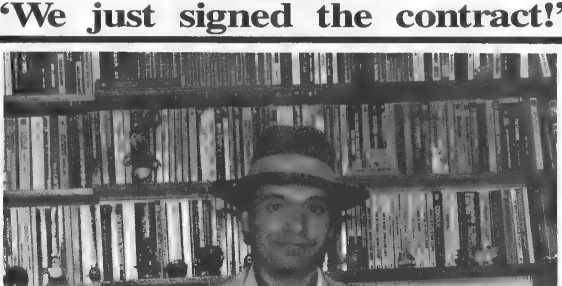


Photo: Randy Lofficier

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JEAN-MARC LOFFICIER

Besides being writers in their own right with a slew of comics, magazine, animation and screen-play credits, Jean-Marc Lofficier and with his talented wife Randy are the dynamic duo who've tackled the task of editing and translating the six new Moebius graphic novels from Marvel. You may have spotted the enigmatic nom-de-plume "R.J.M. Lofficier" popping up on recent DC, Renegade and Marvel U.K. projects. Here now, is the "J.M." half of the team with the inside scoop on Marvel and Moebius...

JEAN-MARC LOFFICIER: We just signed the contract yesterday! It's gone back to Marvel for counter-signature. I sent to **Archie Goodwin** all the translations of **Moebius'** stories for volume one, and some of the films we had already in our possession — the negatives. I've ordered the rest of the films from France, so hopefully, by the end of February, basically, volume one should be ready.

MARK: *You're talking about the plates for reprinting the art of Moebius' original French comics work?*

JEAN-MARC: Yes.

MARK: *And there are — what — six volumes in all?*

JEAN-MARC: Yes, let me outline the series. Volume one is UPON A STAR, and that will contain "Upon a Star," which is like a forty-page graphic novel. All the books are going to be 72 pages, except volume three, which is going to be 120 pages. They will be coming every other month. Probably starting — though it's up to **Archie Goodwin** — in May. We may be a bit too late for May, but at least June, 1987. It's in the hands of Archie and also **Margaret Clark,** who will be co-editing the books. I don't know their exact credit yet. Technically speaking, we're the editors, my wife Randy and myself. Archie and Margaret will be — I don't know — they have to have a title, you know? Executive editor or whatever, it's up to them. The books will be all in color except for only one story, which will appear in black-and-white because we felt that the art was nice enough that we didn't want to color it. "The Detour." A famous **Moebius** story.

MARK: *How many stories will be in each volume?*

JEAN-MARC: The first volume, UPON A STAR, is going to have "Upon A Star," which is forty pages, plus a story called "The Repairman," which is a pre-

"This is the first time a *Moebius* book

quel to "Upon A Star." Now, "Upon A Star" is the first chapter in a series of graphic novels which we have started to call The Aedena Cycle. The Aedena Cycle is eventually going to link up with earlier **Moebius** works, and form the basis of something that you could call a coherent **Moebius** Universe.

MARK: *Is this with the same characters but not with continuing plotlines?*

JEAN-MARC: No continuing plotlines, but with the same characters returning eventually, yes. "Upon A Star" is the first chapter of that new saga — The Aedena Cycle. Okay, the other two stories that will appear in volume one are "Aedena" — which, strangely enough, doesn't have much to do with the other Aedena Cycle *(Laughter.)*

MARK: *Oh boy — just when I thought I was beginning to follow all this!*

JEAN-MARC: *(Laughter.)* You can call it an "Earth-2 Aedena" if you wish!

MARK: *(Laughter.)*

JEAN-MARC: Yes, it's confusing. The story in volume one of the new Marvel series is called "Celestial Venice." All in color, basically unpublished in English. I don't think any of the stories, except possibly "Celestial Venice," have appeared previously. Volume two is going to be called ARZACH. This will be all the fantasy stories of **Moebius**. "Arzach," "The Ballad," "The Detour," a story called "The White Citadel," and "The Hunters of Ktulon." All these, except "The Detour," will be in color. People who are familiar with **Moebius** will probably have seen these in HEAVY METAL in the past. In order to make this volume more attractive to these people, we will be creating a new feature in that book — about five or six pages long — called "The Arzach Universe," which is going to be partly text and partly illustrations from **Moebius**, which is going to give the reader a background on the Universe.

MARK: *So, throughout these six volumes, there will be certain major threads, woven through — but not all the stories will be related to each other?*

JEAN-MARC: Yes, you could say that. That's right. We're also trying to regroup the volumes thematically.

MARK: *Will anything in volume two refer back to volume one, or on to volume three?*

JEAN-MARC: Not in this case. Volume one, however, will refer to volume three and volume five.

MARK: *I should have known!*

JEAN-MARC: *(Laughter.)* But it gets kind of arguable. For instance, Jean told me recently that he plans to sometime in the future do another story that shows that "The Ballad" actually took place in The Airtight Garage. But you won't be able to tell that from reading the Marvel series — so these points are debatable.

MARK: *Sort of like he's working with small corners and patches of a larger canvas.*

JEAN-MARC: Exactly. "The Arzach Universe," for instance, will tie in the stories of Arzach, which are four stories, with "The Detour." Already we're tying in stories that were previously untied. We are kind of working towards some continuity but, at this point, as you pointed out, you can't see the whole canvas. Volume three, now, is going to be called THE AIRTIGHT GARAGE — that will be the 120-page book. It's going to print "The Airtight Garage," which is 98 pages, and a prequel to it, called "Major Fatal." This story features the character of Major Grubert, which is a chief **Moebius** character. Both stories were originally published in France, and in the U.S. in black-and-white. For the first time, in this Marvel edition, they will appear in color — **Moebius** is doing the coloring job himself. And, for the really hardcore **Moebius** fans, there will be one extra page in "The Airtight Garage" that has never appeared in the U.S. before.

I know it's kind of silly and minimal, but when HEAVY METAL did "The Airtight Garage," there was one page that they didn't do! Slipped between the cracks or something.

MARK: *What kind of production methods will Marvel use?*

JEAN-MARC: Graphic novel, probably in the same fashion as, say, the **Frank Miller** DAREDEVIL graphic novel. I might mention something that may be of interest to your readers. We have something that I believe is completely unprecedented in the history of American comics. We have the complete right of approval of *anything* that goes in or on those books — if the books do not conform to the quality of the French edition, we could

will come out here before France."

actually refuse publication! We have **Archie Goodwin's** word, and we have every reason to believe him, that they can indeed match the quality of the French printing. The colors will be comparable to the colors in the French version — Marvel doesn't feel they will have any problem with that.

MARK: *If — what will you do? The question is, when is the difference enough for you to exercise control?*

JEAN-MARC: My feeling, and that of **Archie Goodwin's**, is that, if there was a major screw-up at the printing stage — Marvel themselves would step in to correct it. They've invested a lot in these books! They're not going to spoil them. You could say that the clause in the contract is kind of theoretical. But, on the other hand, just for the principle, it's nice to see a case where the artist has complete control of the final look of the product.

MARK: *Is Jean actually creating any new material for any of these six volumes?*

JEAN-MARC: As a matter of fact, yes. You could say that the Arzach Universe will be new material, because that's not even been done in France yet. As I continue to explain the rest of the volumes, I will point out stuff that's new.

Volume four is going to be called THE LONG TOMORROW & OTHER SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES, and it's a compilation of ten stories, all science-fiction. The big piece in that one is "The Long Tomorrow," which is sixteen pages — written by **Dan O'Bannon** — the guy who wrote ALIEN and directed RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD.

The other big thing in volume four is the famous story "Is Man Good," which Jean mentioned in his interview with you. This volume doesn't have anything new in it, except that half of the book was originally done in black-and-white, and will be colored for the first time, by **Moebius**, especially for the American edition.

Volume five will be called THE GARDENS OF AEDENA. Now, the Gardens of Aedena" is the second chapter in the Aedena Cycle — and it's the direct sequel to "Upon A Star," with the same characters, same continuity — is 50 pages long. This is a completely new story. By the time it comes out in the U.S., I think it will not even have appeared yet in France. This is the first time that a **Moebius** book is going to come out here before it comes out in France.

It also brings back the character of Major Grubert, from "The Airtight Garage." Although, in this story, he is called Master Burg, and Master Burg spelled backwards, is like Grubert.

Volume five will have three stories — besides "The Gardens of Aedena," there will be a short story called "The Unfaithful Body," which is also a completely new story with Major Grubert, and a story called "Hit Man," which **Moebius** did a long time ago.

At this point, **Moebius** plans to do another book in the Aedena Cycle, called THE GODDESS. Jean has worked out the plot, but he hasn't actually started drawing it yet. He's planning to do it in late 1987.

If the Marvel books do well, the plan is that we will probably produce another six books, which will include the John Difool books. Those were written by **Jodorowsky**. He's a cult film director, who did EL TOPO. So far, four of these John Difool books have appeared in France, and two, I think, have been translated into English. Jean will be working on the fifth book in the series. Plus we'd do for Marvel, very likely, the sequel to THE GARDENS OF AEDENA — "The Goddess."

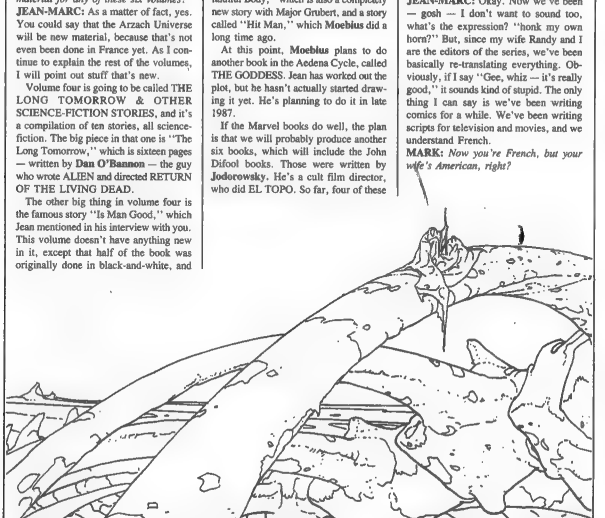
MARK: *These six Marvel books should take a year to be released?*

JEAN-MARC: Yeah. The last book should appear sometime like February or March of 1988. Volume six is going to be called PHARAGONESIA, and in this volume we put all the strange stories that **Moebius** has done that don't fit into any kind of science-fiction or fantasy. For instance, in addition to "Pharagonesia", which is a 20 page story, that is really strange, we're putting a story called "White Nightmare," which is about racism. And a story called "Rock City."

MARK: *Perhaps you can talk about exactly how the books are being translated.*

JEAN-MARC: Okay. Now we've been — gosh — I don't want to sound too, what's the expression? "honk my own horn?" But, since my wife Randy and I are the editors of the series, we've been basically re-translating everything. Obviously, if I say "Gee, whiz — it's really good," it sounds kind of stupid. The only thing I can say is we've been writing comics for a while. We've been writing scripts for television and movies, and we understand French.

MARK: *Now you're French, but your wife's American, right?*



"HEAVY METAL missed the French subtleties."

JEAN-MARC: Right. I don't want the guy who did it to call and say "You asshole! What right do you have to say this?" But I look at the HEAVY METAL translations, and two things strike me. One is, sometimes the person who did it was not familiar enough with French culture to understand a joke, or to really understand what the French idea was. For instance, in "The Airtight Garage" there is a square, a public square, that is called the Square of the Rizla Leaf. In France, when you smoke cigarettes, you want to roll your own. There is this famous cigarette paper — called Rizla.

MARK: *Yes, I remember using them in high school to roll my own —*

JEAN-MARC: Okay, now when you say in French "La du Rizla" you mean the piece of paper that you use to roll your cigarette, but it's funny because it's actually kind of a double-entendre, on a tree leaf, and a cigarette leaf. This kind of thing does not translate very well.

MARK: *Of course, if it's just somebody who knows how to speak French, but is not French themselves — there probably going to miss those idioms and cultural references.*

JEAN-MARC: Absolutely. So, the HEAVY METAL translation missed a lot of the French subtleties. Once you're aware of these things in the text, you can decide what do, whether to find an equivalent, or whatever. For instance, for the Rizla Leaf, I'll give an idea we had — I'm not saying it's the best way to translate it but, you know, my wife and I are not translating by ourselves. **Archie Goodwin** is also involved. For instance, if you want to keep the idea of the leaf, one thing we thought about calling it is "The Square of the Maypole Leaf," because the Maypole carries a certain esoteric connotation that fits perfectly in the **Moebius** Universe and at the same time you still have a pun which is basically nonsensical, like **Moebius'** original Rizla leaf pun. You keep the original version, that's one way of dealing with the problem.

MARK: *It seems like you and your wife make an excellent team for translating, because you're French and she's American.*

JEAN-MARC: Right. And the second thing that struck me about the HEAVY METAL translations, is that you cannot be too faithful to the original French text.

MARK: *Sure, because sometimes the only way to be faithful to the meaning, is if you stray from the letters themselves.*

JEAN-MARC: Absolutely. If you take "The Airtight Garage" and you read it aloud, for instance, it is not going to strike you as good writing, in English. It does not read smoothly. Whereas, if you read it in French, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that it's very well written. I think HEAVY METAL felt a bit too much a prisoner of the French text, rather than going on their own and making it up. They felt "Well, let's be faithful."

MARK: *You're being less faithful to the direct translation, and more faithful to the intended meaning?*

JEAN-MARC: Yes. And we have one advantage which they didn't have —

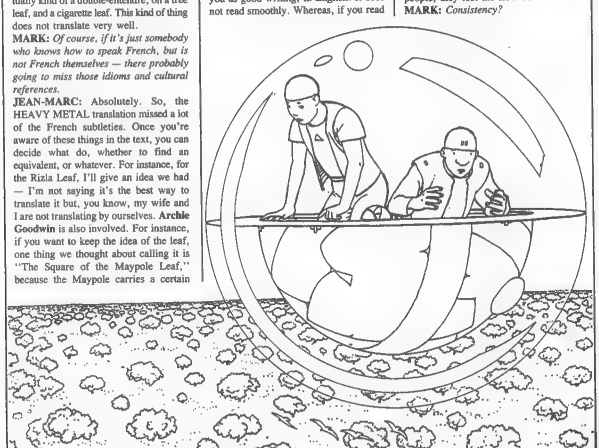
MARK: *Moebius!*

JEAN-MARC: Yes! We can go to **Moebius** and say "Here are a couple of solutions — which one do you like the best?" and he tells us.

MARK: *Sounds like a very collaborative translation process.*

JEAN-MARC: And the third factor is that the HEAVY METAL translations were done over a number of years, by different people, they lost the flow of —

MARK: *Consistency?*



THE GARDENS OF AEDENA

"We will do an 'Art of Moebius' book."

JEAN-MARC: Yes, and continuity. For instance, "The Airtight Garage" has been published over a period of four years. At the beginning of the book, you will find a mention of what they call in the French text the "Spectre generators number 44," or something like that. Now, early in the American version they call it "Spectre," but later on, toward the end, they call it "ghost." Admittedly, spectre and ghost mean the same thing, more or less. But, at the same time, when **Moebius** was using the word "spectre generator," he always used the same word. If you read the story in English and suddenly you see the words changed, then you miss the continuity.

So, by redoing the entire translation from beginning to end, we make sure that we restore the continuity of the Universe. Funny thing — sometimes in comics it happens the other way, where sometimes in France, the translators will change the name of a super villain. I remember in the French edition of THE X-MEN, originally the Banshee was called The Phantom. Then, later on, they realized that they had another character called The Phantom — who was really The Vanisher, because in French you cannot translate "The Vanisher." So suddenly they had two phantoms, so they changed the name of the Banshee to something else. You understand that this does not make life easy for translators!

MARK: *It's hard enough trying to translate super characters into their own universe, as DC recently found out, let alone a foreign one!*

JEAN-MARC: Right! It's very interesting, too, because Jean comes up with names that do not *exist* in French! He creates phony names, for machines, for characters, for countries, for planets — even when he's writing in French. Even in the story we just finished translating — "Upon A Star" — Jean has two galactic repairmen, heroes who go into some kind of machine, and they come up with things like, you know, "The *schmgggblick* was broken, and we have to fix the *glubblucbblub*." And it sounds okay in French, but you cannot use the same word in English because they don't sound good. So you have to basically reinvent your vocabulary to translate some of Jean's words. Which is something that HEAVY METAL wouldn't do. They would either use the French word, which didn't look right in English, or they would translate too directly.

MARK: *How committed is Marvel to this project?*

JEAN-MARC: Without mentioning any figures, I want to say that Marvel has committed themselves to, definitely, a major publicity and promotion budget for this series of six books. I think they're extremely committed, from top to bottom. It has taken six months to negotiate the contract — not too bad for something that big and, from beginning to end, they've been extremely committed, and we have not had any problems on major issues. The six months have been spent, really, in administrative delays — just waiting for each other — not arguing or anything.

MARK: *And Jean is producing new cover art for the whole series?*

JEAN-MARC: Completely.

MARK: *How much will each issue sell for?*

JEAN-MARC: All of them, except the big one, I think, will be priced at $9.95, and the big one might be a bit more. And something else I should mention — we have a handshake agreement, I won't tell you with which publisher, but it's a major one, to do at least one "ART OF MOEBIUS" book, to come out at the end of 1987, or perhaps early '88. It will not be called THE ART OF MOEBIUS probably, but it will be that kind of book.

MARK: *With very little text?*

JEAN-MARC: Yes, art pictures. And we have also — an understanding, I wouldn't call it a handshake agreement, but — a mutual desire with yet another publisher, again, major publisher, major distribution, to do a 1988/99 **Moebius** Calendar. All of this will come together by the end of '87 and '88. There will be a strong presence of **Moebius** on the American market.

Photo: Randy Lofficier

"I created KATY KEENE. We received

BILL WOGGON & BARB RAUSCH

Creator of the original Katy Keene, and Vicki Valentine, Bill Woggon is one of those comics workhorses who, after forty years of solid craftsmanship, is more popular within the industry than to general fans. We hope this rap session helps clue readers in to what we've known all along — he ain't called the Boss-man for nothin'!

SHEL DORF: *We're in Santa Barbara, California, and the other important visitor to Santa Barbara today is a guy named Reagan. He came at the same time we did, but we didn't see him on the highway.*

BILL WOGGON: No, but we saw his picture.

SHEL: *Bill, how long have you lived in Santa Barbara?*

BILL: Since 1948 — moved here from Toledo.

SHEL: *How many in your family?*

BILL: Well, there's an older brother, Elmer — he was the oldest in the family, then there's Netah, then there was Ruth, then I came along, then John, then Glenn. Then my folks called in quits. *(Laughter.)* All the boys were artists.

SHEL: *Why did they all become artists?*

BILL: Elmer, when he was in his younger days, he was taking a federal art correspondence course, and we would be fascinated by watching him do his lessons to mail in. We were fascinated — John and myself — Glenn was too young, and we said, "Gee, we'd like to be artists someday, too." That was before he passed his art test and got in as art director of the TOLEDO BLADE. But Elmer said, "No, you don't want to be artists, be a plumber. You make more money being a plumber."

BARB RAUSCH: Even in those days. *(Laughter.)*

All art accompanying this interview except where noted otherwise, is © 1985 Bill Woggon.

thousands and thousands of letters."

Photo by Dick Martin

Bill Woggon and Barb Rausch.

BILL: Even in those days, yes. Elmer went on to become an art director at the TOLEDO BLADE newspaper.

SHEL: *Did you have any formal training in art youself?*

BILL: No, I more or less followed in his footsteps and went down to the BLADE after I peddled my newspaper route. I would clean up drawings, and ink in borders of things, and kind of learned the hard way. Then, later on I got a job as art director at sixteen years old in a big department store in Toledo — Tiedtkes Department Store. And they handled everything from soup to nuts. They had their own basement with the candy kitchen, they made their own coffee. The first floor was all produce — they had imported produce and ninety-five varieties of cheese, and on the balcony they had an organist playing.

SHEL: *The old time version of the mall, all in one store?*

BILL: Right. On the second floor was clothing, third floor was furniture and hardware and my studio.

SHEL: *You did the ads?*

BILL: I did the illustrations — did everything.

SHEL: *Drew the products that appeared in the ads?*

BILL: That's right. If they had a dollar day sale, I'd do the headline "Dollar Day," then go out and sketch furniture for their illustrations. If they needed a garbage can illustrated, or a box of candy — and at that time, they would bring the box of candy up and have me illustrate it. I didn't return the candy. I took it home and gave it to my wife

SHEL: *Wait a minute — at sixteen you didn't have a wife.*

SINNER

written and illustrated by carlos sampayo and jose munoz
translated by **deborah bonner** edited by **kim thompson** designed by **dale crain**
lettered by **bill spicer** cover color by **geoffrey notkin** consultant **art spiegelman**
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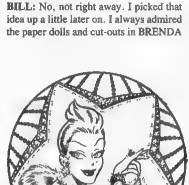
"KATY KEENE printed close to a million."

BILL: I mean the girl I was going with, Jane.
SHEL: *You had known each other since you were sixteen?*
BILL: I was sixteen and she was a little younger — we married when she was nineteen. I also drew clothing, fashions, dresses, everything, and that all helped later when I got to doing KATY KEENE.
SHEL: *Were you also going to school at the time while being art director?*
BILL: I quit high school after two years.
SHEL: *What was your brother Elmer doing at this time?*
BILL: He was art director at the TOLEDO BLADE, then he managed to sell a syndicate on CHIEF WAHOO, and I was working at, and almost having a nervous breakdown doing all this work at Tiedke's, and after he sold WAHOO and got in with **Allen Saunders,** then he hired me as ghost — doing backgrounds and let-

tering. When he created CHIEF WAHOO — he took it to the publishers syndicate and they suggested that he get someone to help him to write it — the writing was a little on the weak side. He said, "I know just the man I can get to do it — I hope." He went back to Toledo — **Allen Saunders** was the movie critic at the old TOLEDO NEWS BEE at that time, and he asked Allen if he would be interested — and boy was he interested, and how! Allen jumped at the opportunity, so then they became partners, with Allen doing the writing.
SHEL: *Allen once told me that he was a frustrated cartoonist himself — always loved cartooning, but ended up an English teacher and also the movie critic for the TOLEDO NEWS BEE. WAHOO became quite a popular strip in the meantime — how many years did you work on that strip?*
BILL: A good many years. I can't

remember just how many years. **Don Dean** was one of the assistants, too.
SHEL: *He did a strip called CRANBERRY BOGGS.*
BILL: Then he did SENOR SIESTA for Archie Comics, and one day, **Harry Shorten**, editor of Archie Comics, came in to see **Don Dean,** and I had a chance to visit Harry, and at that time, they were looking for ideas for comics and I asked **Harry Shorten** if he would be interested, and he said, "Sure, send some in," and I created DOTTY AND DITTO — Dotty, and her pet parrot, Ditto — that little western girl, and that was my first venture with Archie. Then later on I created KATY KEENE and also a family strip, THE TWIDDLES; then KATY KEENE went over real good.
SHEL: *Now KATY KEENE was a back-up feature in the Archie comics?*
BILL: That's right. It ran in PEP, WILBUR, LAUGH, and SUZIE. The first appearance was in 1945 in an issue of WILBUR comics.
SHEL: *Now at this point, did you start right off asking your readers to submit drawings and costumes?*
BILL: No, not right away. I picked that idea up a little later on. I always admired the paper dolls and cut-outs in BRENDA



STARR and BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES, and in the Sunday comics they would have a supplement with paper dolls and they would have the names of those who sent them in, and I thought, "Gee, that's a good idea, I think I'll use that with Katy." Then it worked out so well — we got a lot of mail and then instead of just paper dolls and fashions, I asked them to send in story ideas, cars, boats, horses, anything.
SHEL: *What was the most letters you received in one week from Katy Keene fashions?*
BILL: We received so much mail, I had mail bags made up. I would say thousands and thousands — mail bags full.
SHEL: *In the forties, circulation on comics was on all time high, wasn't it?*
BILL: Yes. KATY KEENE printed close to a million when it was at its top.
SHEL: *When did Katy get her own book?*

BILL: In 1946 or 1947. She was in her own book when we moved out here in 1948.
SHEL: *I understand there are famous designers — professionals — who got their start with their work first appearing in print through the KATY KEENE comic book. Can you tell me about some of your successful graduates?*
BILL: I've got a good many proteges, and one of the top ones is **Barbara Rausch.** She would send in some beautiful work and I would use it. Also **Jack Evans** was another one. And I used a little gimmick of having a "Designer of the Year Award," and I would give them a trophy. **Barbara Rausch** was one of the winners of the award and also **Jack Evans!** I would put their picture in, and they would receive a lot of mail, too. They're two of the top ones that have gone on to do great things in the art field.
SHEL: *Barbara is with us today, and*

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"My cutouts are in Ohio State University."

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we're going to get her side of the story. Barbara, can you remember when you sent your first drawing in to Bill?

BARB: Oh, boy, yes! I think it was the day after I bought my first KATY KEENE comic. I was inspired right through the roof by it, and I had always liked to draw, and had been a great **Disney** fan as a little kid. I think I was about thirteen when I picked up KATY KEENE, and boy! I started filling envelopes with artwork the day after I bought the first one. I think the very first design that ever got published was a very elaborate princess sort of gown — very full, large skirt — renaissance sleeves and a lot of elaborate decorations all over it. That's the thing I always got the biggest enjoyment out of seeing in the pages of KATY KEENE, because that's the kind of thing I tended to produce.

SHEL: *How long did it take before your drawing appeared?*

BARB: I think it was within a year.

SHEL: *Had you forgotten about it at all?*

BARB: Oh no, no, no.

SHEL: *Where you notified by mail that you had won?*

BARB: Yes. The nicest thing about the whole thing from a youngster's point of view was that Bill kept in contact. When you sent in something and he was going to use it, he'd let you know. He always wrote lovely thank you notes, and sent little commemorative gifts — cut-out dolls and things that I treasure and still have to this very day.

SHEL: *That's beautiful communication to your public. Did you know any of your contemporaries who were doing the same thing?*

BILL: No, not to the extent that I did in KATY KEENE, with giving an award for best designer and so on — I carried it out to the utmost. We have had many copies doing it since.

BARB: I'd like to jump in here for as minute and say that there were a lot of young folks out there who were shy about sending things in, but they were touched by Bill, too, and there are some names who are pretty popular in the big media world, much more so than mine. Very famous fashion illustrator **Antonio Lopez**, who just illustrated a book on the Arabian Knights, which is just out on the stands right now, and he's become a fine artist as well as fashion illustrator, and a couple of well known sportswear designers, **Betsey Johnson** and **Willie Smith** who are big successes in the actual fashion world, but were maybe just a little bit shy in those days to actually send Katy a fashion, but they have acknowledged their inspiration in an article that was written by **Marilise Flusser** in a New York newspaper several years ago.

SHEL: *Also, Craig Leavitt, who is the president of the Katy Keene Fan Club.*

BILL: Yes. He had designed some homes for Katy which I used, and he was one of the designers who went on to make a famous name for himself in the designing world, and we still keep in contact. He calls himself my number one fan. He publishes the Katy Keene newsletter and magazine, and he's helped bring Katy back to being popular again.

SHEL: *Now, what was the publisher's reaction to all of this back in the early days?*

BILL: The publisher left me alone, and I sent them the whole thing — they made very few changes and I signed my name bigger than most artists, and they more or less left me alone.

SHEL: *That was unusual in those days, for an artist to sign his name to the comic books.*

BILL: Yes, it was, and I signed my name big enough so people could read it.

SHEL: *What was your brother Elmer's reaction?*

BILL: Well, I'll tell you, this is funny! Elmer . . . when I started KATY KEENE, I was going to leave WAHOO and go out on my own with KATY KEENE, and he said, "It will never go." I'll tell you another one: **John Goldwater**, the president of Archie Comics — when I came out and wanted to do a paper doll and advertise it in our own books and have it printed here — I would handle the whole thing, and I've got the letter in my files to this day — he said, "Bill, I'll give you the go-ahead. You can put in ads and have your paper dolls printed and send them out, but I don't want you to get burned. We're not going to back you. If you think you can do it, O.K." And little did he know — I got together with a printer here in Santa Barbara — he knew the chances of advertising in our own book, and he said, "Sure, I'll print them up, you do the drawings, and we'll split the profits." And it went over like a million.

SHEL: *How many did he print?*

BILL: He printed them as we needed them. He had a printing shop, and it was a great thing to keep on the presses when business wasn't so good. He went along with me.

SHEL: *He didn't have any up front money to put out?*

BILL: No, never put a dime out.

SHEL: *Barbara, did you remember sending away for that?*

BARB: I was lucky, I got them as gifts for having designs published and I still have and treasure them to this day. They are a hot item among paper doll collectors now.

SHEL: *Now that it's a rare paper collectible?*

BARB: They are kind of scarce. Other little girls cut theirs up — not me!

BILL: We did give a lot of them away for all the designers whose names were used, and I would acknowledge them, like

"Harry Shorten said 'Billy, if you had

Barb said, and they would get a gift of a paper doll or a thank you.

SHEL: *Did you ever think at that time that they would be in a permanent collection in a university?*

BILL: No, little did I know . . .

SHEL: *But they are.*

BILL: Yes, they are in Ohio State University . and I can say that I quit high school but I felt like I went through the Ohio State college and university and went through it with Katy Keene, I figure I ought to get a diploma.

Getting back to KATY KEENE — it was a family affair, too. The characters I had in KATY KEENE — Katy was my dream girl, Sis the candy kid was patterned after our daughter, Suzie, when she was little back in Toledo. She wore glasses and had pigtails. When my dad was younger, he was a boxer, and my mother had him give up the game because in those days a boxer was a bum — but I patterned K.O. Kelly after my dad. Gloria Grandbilt was the jealous one, I patterned her after my wife. I had to have a little boy character in there for Sis, and he was patterned after my son, Bill. So it's a family affair, just like the comic book Barb and I are doing now, VICKI VALENTINE.

SHEL: *What kind of stories did you give Katy Keene, and tell us a little about Katy herself. What was her profession?*

BILL: I was living in Toledo when I created Katy, and Katy was living in New York, and dreaming about getting into the movies . . .just dreaming about the big time. Then when we moved out west, I brought Katy out west, too. She always never succeeded in the big time, but she was a dreamer.

BARB: An aspiring starlet.

BILL: And on all the stories, we always kept good, clean material.

SHEL: *What were some of the letters like in Katy? What did girls put in their letters? I imagine that it was mainly girls in your audience?*

BILL: Mostly, but quite a few boys, too. They loved Katy Keene, the stories, and the dolls and the fashions — all the letters were good, and we received an awful lot of letters and fan mail. I'll tell you one interesting story — when we were getting tons of mail — the mail bags full, and this printer that had the printing shop, we arranged with another elderly woman for her to open the mail, send out the orders, and so on, and then we'd get the money and divide it. But she would keep the fashions, and I would receive them. Then my family and I would go over all of them religiously, and file the best story ideas, the best poetry, the best fashions, best love scenes, and so on. I've still got some of Barb's in my file that I could dig out right now. This woman would send me the designs, and there were a lot of fans that would send a little coupon ordering a paper doll set that sold for a dime then, and that dime would get mixed in with the designs and the order wouldn't get filled, but we would go through all this mail and they would end up burning in a trash can a lot of designs that we weren't going to be using anyway, then when the trash can would get full, I would empty it and find dimes in the ashes that were mixed in with the designs. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Bill, who owned KATY KEENE?*

BILL: Archie Comics.

SHEL: *Did you do this for a flat salary, or did you get a percentage of the sales?*

BILL: Flat salary. I did it for so much a page.

SHEL: *Do you remember what your page rate was for story and finished art?*

BILL: The top was fifty dollars a page when it ended. That was for everything — pencilling, inking, lettering, and writing. Wasn't that a deal? It was maybe twenty a page when I started.

SHEL: *And comic books at that time were selling for a dime. Do you remember what the circulation was?*

BILL: Circulation could be close to a million. One time when **Harry Shorten** came to see me, when I was working closely on KATY KEENE, he said, "Billy, if you had the copyright on KATY KEENE, you'd be a millionaire."

SHEL: *When did the popularity of KATY KEENE level off?*

BILL: In the 1960s — comic book sales were dropping off.

BARB: Everybody had TV.

BILL: They were going more for the TV, but they weren't reading comics, and one day we were together at the Woggon Wheels ranch on April fifteenth with **Al Vermeer,** who was doing PRISCILLA'S POP, and his wife — they were good friends and we would get together several times a year. We were having breakfast and the phone rang. They said, "Telegram for **Bill Woggon** from Archie Comic Publications, **John Goldwater:** Stop work on KATY KEENE immediately, air mail letter will follow." And I damned near dropped over, and **Al Vermeer** thought. "Oh boy, if that ever happened to me." The letter came, **John Goldwater** explained how sales had dropped off — they did pay me some before they dropped the whole thing.

SHEL: *How did you get yourself back in*

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the copyright you'd be a millionaire.'''

the black, so to speak? What did you do after Katy?

BILL: Al Vermeer, God bless him — he knew my circumstances, and he had me do some work on his strip. He would send me the rough and have me pencil them in, and even do some inking for him, and he helped me for a while, then I got into coloring books, and religious bible bookstore sales for coloring books.

SHEL: *Did you have an agent?*

BILL: No, never had an agent — still don't have an agent. But Shel, you know a kick in the pants is a boost.

SHEL: *That's a quote — you really believe that?*

BILL: I do. A kick in the pants is a boost. And Barb and I wouldn't be together with VICKI VALENTINE if it wasn't for Archie Comics and what I got from them — you know what I mean — it was a kick in the pants.

SHEL: *During the heyday of Katy Keene, there wasn't such an organized comics fandom — except in your life, there really was. Then, when Marvel Comics started printing the names and addresses of the fans in their letter columns, that sort of created the Marvel Comics fandom, and DC as well. But you were really the forerunner of the contact with the reader.*

BILL: Exactly.

SHEL: *You mentioned coloring books. I remember seeing out here on the coast they had Sambo's restaurants, and I think you did the Sambo tiger. Didn't you create that?*

BILL: Yes. The Sambo's restaurants were just starting to build up then, and I knew **Sam Battistone** — young Sam and his father started it, and they had the number one restaurant in Santa Barbara, and one day out on the golf course at the country club, young Sam — I mentioned to him about doing a coloring book for Sambo's, and he said, ''That's a good idea. Go in and see **Stan Demos.**''

SHEL: *Did you pencil and ink these coloring books?*

BILL: Well, I had an assistant help me on some, but I created the whole thing.

SHEL: *Where they sold or given away?*

BILL: Both. They were used as a gimmick for birthday parties for kids, and they sold them, too.

SHEL: *Was it your idea to create the Sambo tiger?*

BILL: No, the Sambo tiger was not the same as in the last book. Little Black Sambo, by the way, wasn't a black boy, he was an East Indian, and the tiger at the time . . .

SHEL: *Chased him around the tree and became butter.*

BILL: That's right, and later on in the last book, they changed the image of the tiger. But when we did the first book, they had over fifty restaurants. They were building up fast, and I did a centerfold for the kids to color that said ''Over 100 Restaurants'' — before I got it to press, we changed it to ''Over 150.'' They grew fast, and I would handle the whole thing through Rotary Press in Anaheim — send them the artwork, see that they were boxed up a hunded and fifty to a box, sent to Sambo's warehouse to be distributed to the restaurant managers. We would print up toward the end, when it was going the biggest, 260,000 — they would last four months, then we would print 260,000 more and I got a royalty on that.

SHEL: *So every four months, a new one came out.*

BILL: Not a new on, but a reprint. We put a new one out once a year.

SHEL: *How many different books were there?*

BILL: Six. I get letters from fans today who pick up those books, and I just got one yesterday.

BARB: Bill, didn't you do something for Uncle John's Pancake House?

BILL: Yes, I did a coloring book for Uncle John's Pancake House, too.

SHEL: *Did this come from the Uncle John's people seeing the Sambo's coloring book?*

BILL: No, that was before Sambo's. **John Dahl** was a member of our church, and I approached him out in front of the church and I said, ''How about a coloring book?'' And he said, ''Fine.'' He had an agent, and I worked with her and I did the coloring book for him.

SHEL: *That was about the time that pancake houses were starting a new craze.*

BILL: That was before Sambo's.

SHEL: *Living in the midwest, we would look to California for the next trend, and I didn't know that it was Santa Barbara that started that.*

BILL: Sambo's was the best account I had since KATY KEENE folded — it was a dream until they grew so fast, they went bankrupt.

SHEL: *But Katy Keene wasn't entirely out of your life. Want to tell me how Katy Keene came back into your life?*

BILL: Marilise Flusser, fashion designer and coordinator at Saks, Fifth Avenue — she was a fan of KATY KEENE. Her husband, **Alan Flusser,** is a famous designer for men. She was fashion designer at Saks, and she decided to write to the names of the designers in the KATY KEENE books and see what they were doing today. That was several years ago.

Comics Interview

So far, there are only four titles from David Anthony Kraft's publishing company, but I like all of them.

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That is a much-too-simplified summation of a rich, complex SF novel in comic-book form. Ted's art has been compared to many different American artists (none of whom work Ted has seen; he was born in Thailand and grew up in Africa) and is remarkably clear and exciting.

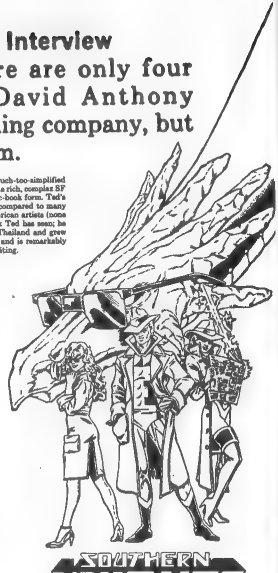
Grade: A.

X-THIEVES™

• *Aristocratic X-traterrestrial Time-Traveling Thieves* (*X-Thieves* for short) has had two first issues, which is annoying to indexers and compilers of price guides, but the bright, sprightly scripts by Henry Vogel and the appropriately humorous art of Mark Propst make up for that. One of the main features of this comic book is that, like the *Mad* comic books, the panels are filled with gags, such as the crisis hotline which warns, "New universe forming — disaster imminent!"

The Southern Knights make a guest appearance in the second first issue, in which the X-Thieves steal the formula for original Coca-Cola. This is one of the best of the funny comic books (and one of the handful that really *is* funny).

Grade: A.



SOUTHERN KNIGHTS™

• I haven't seen the last couple of issues of *Southern Knights* yet but, unless the series has gone radically downhill since #16, this is still one of the best and most original of all the supergroups. Grade: A.

• While *Comics Interview* is not a comic book, I think I can squeeze in a recommendation. This excellent publication gives a well-rounded view of the industry, with interviews with writers, pencillers, inkers, letterers, colorists, and others.

Naturally, your interest in an issue will depend on who is being interviewed, but there have been 40 issues of *Comics Interview* and no totally dull ones — not even the *G.I. Joe* issue. Grade: A.

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"DC's Nelson Bridwell was in my first issue."

SHEL: *Interesting idea. She went through all the old comics?*

BILL: She did, and she was amazed at what they were doing, and how well they were doing. She decided she was going to do a book, and she would call me at eleven P.M. here, so it must have been two A.M. in New York, and she would go gung-ho on this. And then **John Goldwater** even gave her permission to go ahead and compile all this and maybe do a book on it. She then became pregnant and kind of cooled off on it, and **Craig Leavitt** picked it up from there.

SHEL: *This was like the beginning of the KATY KEENE fan movement. Barb, do you remember being contacted by this woman?*

BARB: Absolutely. Her letter had to follow me all around the barn. I was visiting my parents in Phoenix, where they had retired at the time, and the letter came to me at my old address in Flint — my parents old home which they had sold, then it went to the home of my uncle, who has the same last name, also in Flint. And he knew, of course, where my mom and dad were staying, so he mailed it on to them. So it reached me a little too late for me to be included in the article. She wrote her article for the SOHO WEEKLY NEWS in New York City. It appeared in 1978 or 1979. She was particularly interested in the Katy fans who had actually gone on to break into the fashion world, like **Antonio Lopez** and **Willie Smith** and so on. But she also contacted a number of people like myself who weren't active in the actual fashion world, but she found out that quite a few of us were professional artists in one way or another. I think an outstanding number of us had made art our profession and our living.

SHEL: *You, at that time, were an art teacher?*

BARB: That's right. I worked for the Flint, Michigan, public school system, and at the time that I received her letter I was working half time by choice, and working on writing fiction, but because of her letter bringing all of us fans togethers and getting us back in contact, I started doing Katy Keene fan art, got into comics fandom, and here I am today.

BILL: She wrote to over five hundred. Barb had moved, but the letter finally caught her, and there are probably a lot more she never got hold of because they had moved. She got hold of **Craig Leavitt, Jack Evans, John Lucas**....

BARB: He read the Chicago newspaper article and he got in touch with her. Called her all the way in New York — perfect strangers.

SHEL: *This paid off for him in a career he's enjoying today.*

BARB: Absolutely. Of course, he was already a successful commercial illustrator.

SHEL: *Did you realize the extent of the impact that your creation had on these people?*

BILL: I surmised it, but I was really pleased when she went into it that thoroughly.

SHEL: *It's like it has lasted them their entire lives.*

BILL: There were a lot of them that became...like **Willie Smith**, and some of them that were inspired by Katy Keene books and fashions and really became famous.

SHEL: *At any point, did you have a regular fashion designer create these costumes for real, or had you thought*

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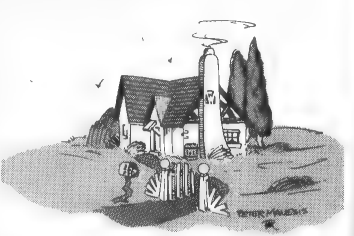

THE WESTFIELD COMPANY

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"Things really started to get hot."

about bringing out a line of these costumes?

BARB: These were the days before merchandising.

BILL: No, but I did have a fella who put out a Katy Keene doll, and we advertised and sold not too many. By the way, **Nelson Bridwell**, DC editor, was in my first issue of KATY KEENE with crazy designs, and he did some way out stuff — MAD type of stuff. He bought one of these Katy Keene dolls, and he still has it. The dresses were tattered and torn — his aunt made some new dresses for it...

BARB: He brought it to the Katy Con.

SHEL: *What is a Katy Con?*

BILL: Katy Con was started when **Craig Leavitt** took the bull by the horns where Marilise left off. He decided to have a Katy Keene convention with as many fans as he could, and the first one was held here in Santa Barbara. We had about thirty or forty and we had it at the Biltmore Hotel and everybody dressed up and we had a great time. Barb was there.

BARB: It was like something I'd been waiting for all my life. When I had been doing Katy Keene as a teenager — somehow, I don't know why, there wasn't anybody else in my neighborhood or school that was involved in it, and it was my special thing — I always wished that I had someone to share it with, and then all of a sudden here are all the people who were sharing it from their childhood, and it was the most tremendous thing. It was like a big family reunion. This was the first time I met **Trina Robbins** — she was

there, and she brought along **Steve Leialoha**. It was the first time I met **Craig Leavitt** and **John Lucas**. A good number of Bill's long time friends were there — **Cassie Bill**, his head assistant, whom I had met once a long time ago when she gave me the grand tour of Bill's studio, and she was still the same delightful lady. **Rick Geary** was there — people I was impressed with as a fan — I was meeting them.

BILL: Then we had a second one, and a year later another one, and at one of the last ones that we had, we met on a Friday night — that was one where **Marilise Flusser** came out from New York. We started out on a Friday night at Rusty's Pizza Parlor, in the back room. **Bill Ziegler** did a little chalk talk and **John Lucas** drew on the chalk talk board, and **Barb** did, and **Jack Evans** did also. The next night we went to the Biltmore and had a dress-up.

BARB: I guess things really started to get hot when Bill was invited to be a guest at the San Diego Comic-Con, and among other people, we met **Bob Overstreet**, and that certainly paid off great.

So ends Part One. Be sure to catch Part Two, when Bill and Barbara reveal why they currently feel like they're in hog heaven, plus lots more!

"I was moonlighting doing an incredibly

ROGER ARMSTRONG

I first met Roger Armstrong at a Cartoon Arts Professional Society meeting in Los Angeles. His name was familiar to me because of an old article I'd read about him in CARTOONIST'S PROFILE magazine Roger has been a cartoonist for many years, and he has ghosted several strips. Because of not being able to sign his work, he is not known to the public, but in the industry he is very respected, and has more than "paid his dues."

We got to know each other better when I did a lettering demo at his cartooning class at Orange Coast College.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Roger Armstrong
Born: 12 October 1917 — Los Angeles, CA
Residence: Dana Point, CA
Occupation: Cartoonist, Artist, Watercolorist, Educator
Credits: ELLA CINDERS (1950-61), NAPOLEON AND UNCLE ELBY (1950-60), LITTLE LULU (1964-66), BUGS BUNNY (comic strip 1979-81), thousands of comic books for Western Publishing — BUGS BUNNY, PORKY PIG, SEVEN DWARFS, FLINTSTONES, SUPER GOOF, BEAGLE BOYS, etc., etc., and SCAMP
Favorite Cartoonist: Quentin Blake
Favorite Illustrator: Charles Dana Gibson
Favorite Author: Kurt Vonnegut
Worst Advice I Was Given: From Fred Harman (RED RYDER) when I was sixteen years old — "Give up cartooning, you have no talent." I still have the letter somewhere.

SHEL DORF: *So, Rog, tell us about the LITTLE LULU strip — when did you get the job?*

ROGER ARMSTRONG: Once upon a time, there was a character named Little Lulu, originated by **Marge Henderson**, the wife of a very prominent Philadelphia doctor, and at a party one night, somebody from the Curtis Publishing Company said that they were looking for a little filler spot in the back there.

horrible thing called I LOVE LUCY."

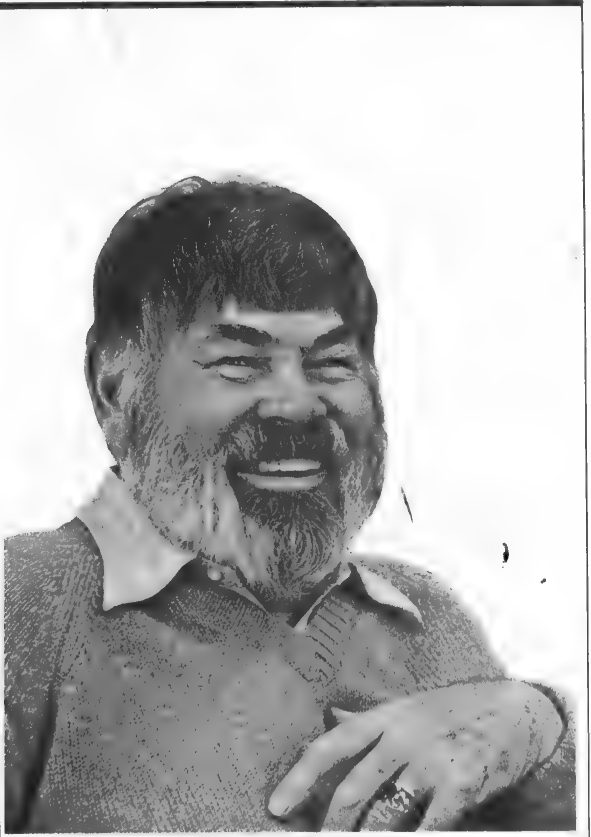
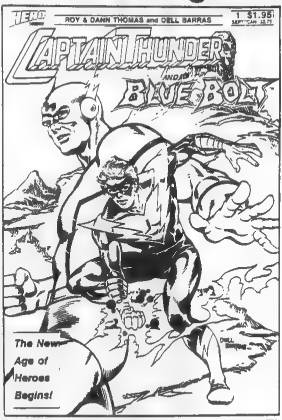


Photo: Shel Dorf

The New Age of Heroes Begins!



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"And Al was pulling his hair out."

SHEL: *In the SATURDAY EVENING POST, right?*

ROGER: In the SATURDAY EVENING POST, and I guess the good doctor presented his wife and said, "Well, Marge here does little drawings — cute little things," and this editor says, "Send them in." And she did, and the next thing you know, there's Little Lulu in the back spot, which was occupied by HENRY at one time, and occupied by HAZEL at one time. For a long time, Little Lulu was the star of the little spot on the back page.

SHEL: *In one color — red, and then the black.*

ROGER: Well, the red was when she became the Kleenex girl — that was when she was wearing the little red dress. She was the Kleenex trademark for a long time — made them a lot of money.

SHEL: *What year are we talking about?*

ROGER: Oh, 1940s into the Fifties, when when she appeared in every damn Kleenex ad there was. Anyway, I came into the thing kind of by the side door, because I was working for Western Publishing, and I was doing — let's see — what the hell was I doing? Oh, I was the director at the museum at that time — I was director of the Laguna Beach Museum, but I was also moonlighting doing an incredibly horrible thing called I LOVE LUCY.

SHEL: *(Laughter.) Augh! I remember that.*

ROGER: Oh, God.

SHEL: *Everybody said, "That's got to be a winner — it's the most popular show on TV." I remember that came out in the DETROIT TIMES. That was your strip — I didn't know that.*

ROGER: I hated them because Lucille liked to look at them, and that friend of hers was such a dish-faced broad that it was difficult to get really good caricature of her.

SHEL: *Ethel.*

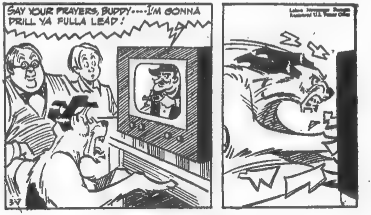
ROGER: A lovely woman, I understand, but difficult to draw. So I was at Western, and Chase said that **Al Fegley** was looking for someone to draw the LITTLE LULU comic strip — "Do you want to draw it?", and I said "Hell, yes." And he said, "Go down and talk to Al." I can't remember the name of the guy — I wish to God that I could — but he was falling behind in his deadlines, and Al was pulling his hair out — he was desperate in trying to get drawings out of this guy.

SHEL: *It wasn't the man that was doing the comic book, was it?*

ROGER: No, that was done back east. No, this was out here on the coast. I can't think of his name — very good cartoonist, but he had a bad habit of missing deadlines. So Al hired me on the spot, and so I went to Chase and I said, "I'm not going to be doing any more comic book work, because I can't do both." And he hit the ceiling. He was furious. He said, "I wouldn't have told you about it if I thought you weren't going to do comic book work for me."

SHEL: *What comic books were you doing at the time?*

ROGER: Everything. You name it, I was drawing for it. I did everything at Western. I even did a little rompfest called PUFF-N-STUFF. I didn't do the first book of PUFF-N-STUFF, but I did every one after that, and I did a thing called LIDSVILLE. I don't know if you remember LIDSVILLE.



Rog ghosted this strip for several years.

SHEL: *No, I don't.*

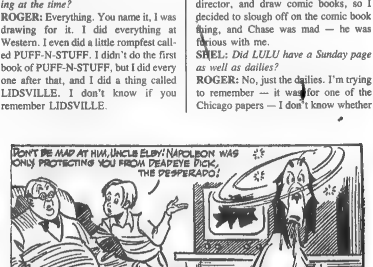
ROGER: It was on TV, and it was a Saturday morning thing, and I did the comic books on it. I was also doing the FUNKY PHANTOM for **Hanna-Barbera.**

SHEL: *That I remember.*

ROGER: I did all of those. I did a whole stack of those things. Anyway, I knew I couldn't do LITTLE LULU, be a museum director, and draw comic books, so I decided to slough off on the comic book thing, and Chase was mad — he was furious with me.

SHEL: *Did LULU have a Sunday page as well as dailies?*

ROGER: No, just the dailies. I'm trying to remember — it was for one of the Chicago papers — I don't know whether



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"I did Warner Brothers and Disney. . ."

it was for the TRIBUNE or for the SUN-TIMES.

SHEL: *We found it in the TRIBUNE's properties.*

ROGER: Is that where you found it? Then that's where we were.

SHEL: *They have two books of it. They have the complete run at the museum in Rye, New York. . .*

ROGER: Is that right?

SHEL: *. . .which will be our source material when we do a reprint book on it.*

ROGER: I can get a whole stack of those damn things.

SHEL: *Did you write them as well?*

ROGER: I wrote some of them. Al wrote almost all of them, but every once and a while I'd slip one in — he'd run dry, and I'd write maybe a week or so and then he'd get back on the ball again.

SHEL: *Do you know if he used the source — the early SATURDAY EVENING POST cartoons?*

ROGER: I don't think he did. I think they were all things that emanated from Lulu as an entirely . . .see, when she became a comic-book character, she changed her character immensely.

SHEL: *They were quite different.*

ROGER: Entirely different. I found a collection — a little hardcover, squarebound, of a collection of those SATURDAY EVENING POST LULU'S.

ROGER: No kidding?

SHEL: *That was a revelation, and those were really Marge's work.*

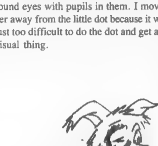
ROGER: Oh, yeah — very quaintly drawn.

SHEL: *And so charming, I don't think anybody came close to her lines.*

ROGER: No, because they were the untrained — she was untrained.

SHEL: *But she was a little mean — a little meaner than the comic-book character was.*

ROGER: But they had their own appeal. But you take a trained cartoonist, she's going to do them a little bit differently, and then when I got hold of the thing, I completely changed the character. I gave her round eyes with pupils in them. I moved her away from the little dot because it was just too difficult to do the dot and get any visual thing.



SHEL: *So you had a lot of leeway. How long did it run?*

ROGER: Oh God, a long time — I don't remember. I have quite a good-sized stack that I sent to Al when we were gonna revive the thing as a panel. Then all of a sudden he said that they had decided to discontinue it, and that was the end of that.

SHEL: *You are able to work in so many styles, Roger. Can you go through and name some of the different strips you've worked on? Have you been able to sign your name to all of these, or have you ghosted them?*

ROGER: Most of them I ghosted. Let's see. . .in the comic-book world I did almost exclusively **Warner Brothers** and **Disney** things, but I did practically every single one of the characters in both fields. I don't recall every having done Pepe LePew, the skunk — I did Porky, Bugs, SNIFFLES AND MARY JANE. . .

SHEL: *Oh, I loved that strip — great.*

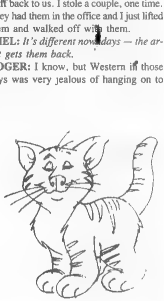
ROGER: I did that for a long time. I wrote the SNIFFLES AND MARY JANE, and I wrote the PORKY PIG — some of them, not all of them — Chase wrote a lot of them. **Jackie Estrada** is such a fan of SNIFFLES AND MARY JANE. We know this lady down in San Diego who just loved them. She's a very nice woman. She's a textbook and magazine editor, and she writes textbooks and is very into comics and is very knowledgeable about comics and cartoonists and such.

SHEL: *Roger, do you have any originals for SNIFFLES AND MARY JANE?*

ROGER: They never gave any of that stuff back to us. I stole a couple, one time. They had them in the office and I just lifted them and walked off with them.

SHEL: *It's different nowadays — the artist gets them back.*

ROGER: I know, but Western in those days was very jealous of hanging on to



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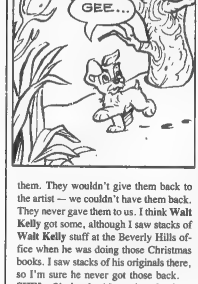
"I'm eleven years old and I'm working



them. They wouldn't give them back to the artist — we couldn't have them back. They never gave them to us. I think **Walt Kelly** got some, although I saw stacks of **Walt Kelly** stuff at the Beverly Hills office when he was doing those Christmas books. I saw stacks of his originals there, so I'm sure he never got those back.

SHEL: *Oh, brother! I wonder what happened to them?*

ROGER: Shredded 'em.

SHEL: *They actually did do that, right? They shredded them? Arrgh!*

ROGER: Oh, yeah. They shredded a lot of that stuff. I have an old LITTLE HIAWATHA — I have two pages that I did.

SHEL: *I loved that strip. That was a little filler wasn't it? For the Sunday page?*

ROGER: No, in the comic book it was a ten page story.

SHEL: *Oh, okay, I remember now, but I thought the comic book was a paste-up of the Sunday page.*

ROGER: No, we drew those as originals. I did LITTLE HIAWATHA, and for a longtime, I did the drawfs. I was the drawf man, I did all of the seven dwarfs and Thumper, too.

SHEL: *Can you still draw them today?*

ROGER: No, I can still draw Dopey. Dopey's the only one, but he looks so much like Elmer Fudd. There's a cat named O'Malley that I did for a while.

SHEL: *Oh, sure.*

ROGER: That was a good character, Super Goof I did for a long time, the Beagle Boys I did for a long time. I always shied away from Donald Duck and Scrooge — I could not draw them at all.

SHEL: *Are you fast, Roger?*

ROGER: Oh, yeah. I could knock that stuff out so fast.

SHEL: *Let's touch on your training — let's go back. Where were you born?*

ROGER: Los Angeles.

SHEL: *What was your early art education?*

ROGER: Zilch. I went to parochial schools, and there was very little emphasis put on anything but academics. I didn't have any art training until I got to Pasadena Junior College, and then I got into the art department there, and it was all right — it was typical high school art training.

SHEL: *Were you always drawing as a kid?*

ROGER: Oh, yeah. From the time when I was about ten or eleven years old I drew constantly. I took the **Landon** course — that's how I learned to do cartons — **Charles Nelson Landon.**

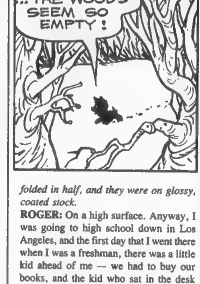
SHEL: *I have that course at home.*

ROGER: Do you have the whole thing?

SHEL: *There are a lot of plates missing. My dad found it in an antique store, and when I was a kid, he gave me pen and ink lessons using those plates.*

ROGER: Well, I'll tell you how I got it. It was a very expensive course — it cost twenty-five dollars with criticism and everything. You send in your stuff — I couldn't afford that — I'm eleven years old, and I'm working the back of a vegetable truck. In those days, the Japanese — at least in my little town — would drive a vegetable truck up and down the streets, blowing the horn, and the ladies would come out — my job was to — I would sit on the tailgate, and my job was to carry the boxes in. I got two bits a day, and I worked on Saturday and got a dollar. So every week I got two and a quarter. So finally, I had written in the prospectus and all that stuff, and avidly looked it over, and drooled over the correspondence course and everything. Finally, they put out an offer — for five bucks, they would send the entire course — no criticism. So I said, "Five bucks." So I got this beautiful package in the mail, and it was a funny thing, I was going to a place called . . .

SHEL: *Those plates were nice. They were*



folded in half, and they were on glossy, coated stock.

ROGER: On a high surface. Anyway, I was going to high school down in Los Angeles, and the first day that I went there when I was a freshman, there was a little kid ahead of me — we had to buy our books, and the kid who sat in the desk ahead of me, **Ed Hardise** — I'll never forget him, he turned around and took my history book and drew this absolutely miraculous cartoon — I didn't say a word — drew this gorgeous cartoon in my book and handed it back to me, I looked at that and realized that this man was a genius. He's eleven years old and he draws this gorgeous cartoon — he's a genius. Well, this is September. I got my first package from the **Landon** school at the beginning of the Christmas vacation. I spent two solid weeks working from those plates, and I went back to school in January right after Christmas break and I took one of **Ed Hardise's** books and I drew this absolutely gorgeous cartoon. He took one look at it, his eyes bugged out of his pretty little head, and he said, "How in the hell did you learn to do that?" I said, "Over the Christmas holiday — nothing to it." Do you know, he never drew anymore. *(Laughter)* The kid quit drawing.

SHEL: *Is that right?*

ROGER: Yeah. He wasn't going to draw anymore. So that was my earliest art thing with the **Landon** school.

SHEL: *That's a charming story — that's great. Milton Caniff sent away for the Landon course as a child. That's how he learned to do everything.*

ROGER: I remember seeing his stuff. And **Noel Sickles — Bud Sickles.**

SHEL: *He still uses the principles he learned in the Landon course.*

ROGER: So do I.

SHEL: *He drew two figures of Steve Canyon — one was kind of stationary and one was a real action figure, and they were*

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the back of a vegetable truck."

like stick figures. Just like the Landon taught you how to do motion, movement, and all the principles still apply.

ROGER: You bet they do.

SHEL: *So what was your first commercial cartoon job?*

ROGER: I was sixteen years old and had been drawing like crazy and learning black and white, and my uncle had some friends in Los Angeles who ran a funny little advertising agency, and their names were **Craig and Schultz** — Craig and Schultz Advertising Agency, and at Sixth and Main was the big terminal for the Pacific and Electric railway. We used to have an absolutely phenomenal surface trolley transportation system in southern California until World War Two.

SHEL: *Didn't it even go as far as Redlands?*

ROGER: Oh, yeah — you could go to Redlands, San Bernadino, Santa Monica, you could go all over — everywhere. Big red cars — "Ride the Big Red Cars." And they were huge, they were like a railway car, only they had a trolley.

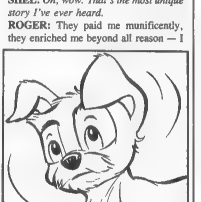
SHEL: *There was just one turnaround point there?*

ROGER: No, then they would reverse the thing. The motorman would take his thing and go up to the other end and plug it in there, and off again. Then the conductor would get out and pull the trolley around, hook it on to the back, and you'd go the other way. It would go any way you wanted it to go. Anyway, the terminal was at Sixth and Main Streets in Los Angeles — an enormous, huge place because they had all these places — it was like Grand Central Station — very much. Grand Central Station is about twice as big, but it was the same idea, and you'd go to these different places, and you'd get this train for San Bernadino, and this train for Santa Monica — you know, the gates were listed. But there was this big overhead projector thing that had an endless reel of advertising. So they hired me to do fillers.

So I would do these fillers — little black and whites, and they would blow them up. And as a kid — I'm sixteen years old, and I would watch stuff come around for hours — it was just wonderful.

SHEL: *Oh, wow. That's the most unique story I've ever heard.*

ROGER: They paid me munificently, they enriched me beyond all reason — I



was as rich as Croesus — I got one dollar for every six cartoons. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *It was a lot of money in those days. Gee whiz.*

ROGER: They blew them up twice life size — somewhere I have some small photographs I did of those, probably over in my mini-storage — I have a whole bunch of stuff there.

SHEL: *Oh, great! What subjects did you draw?*

ROGER: Just cartoons.

SHEL: *Just cartoons?*

ROGER: Gag cartoons. One of the things I did — I used a lot of black. I'd draw the cartoon and then fill it in with black, and like Tom Sawyer, I would teach my peers and I would let them fill in the black. I'd give them a brush, and I'd say, "Now you very carefully . . .", and I taught them how to fill in blacks, so that was my first job as a teacher. They would do all the blacks, and I would put the drawing in. Then somewhere in there, my dad was killed in an automobile accident, which left us pretty bereaved.

SHEL: *Do you have any brothers or sisters?*

ROGER: I have one sister, who lives in Sierra Madre. Anyway, my uncle — again was doing the P.R. — he was a promoter and public relations man — he was doing the P.R. for the San Diego Exposition, so I went down there, and in Balboa Park they were building a replica of an 1849 mining town. So I'm sitting on the couch, and I always used to sit and sketch.

SHEL: *This was in 1919, right?*

ROGER: 1919, yeah. *(Laughter.)* No, this was in 1936.

SHEL: *Oh — I was thinking about the first one. I'm sorry. (Laughter.) I just got some antique postcards, and it said "San Diego Exposition, 1919." I didn't even think about it — you would be much older than you are.*

ROGER: So this is 1936, and I'm like a little kid — I'm sixteen.

SHEL: *I was a little kid then, too — I was three years old.*

ROGER: Anyway, I was sitting there drawing, and a guy and his coterie walked in back, and the guy stopped and looked over my shoulder, then he came around front and handed me his card and he said, "You want a job, kid? Come see me

IT MUST BE MY IMAGINATION.
GET YOUR ELBOW OUT OF MY EAR!
CAN I HAVE A GLASS OF WATER?
GO TO SLEEP! WINTER'S ALMOST OVER!
QUIET!
PIPE DOWN!
WILL YOU STOP THAT SNORING!
GET YOUR COLD FEET OFF MY BACK!
3-17
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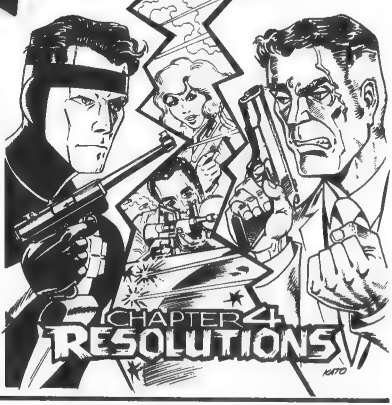
EXPLOSIVE FINAL ISSUE

STREET FIGHTER™

"... excellent ... well plotted, exciting ... reminiscent of the earliest issues of THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ... a marvelous job of storytelling."
Don Thompson
The Comics Buyer's Guide



AND COMING SOON!

MR. JIGSAW™
MAN OF A THOUSAND PARTS

OCEAN COMICS™
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"Hamburgers and milkshakes were a dime."

PATCHES, HE'S TOO YOUNG TO HANG THAT UP IN HIS ROOM!
MAYBE HE'S OLDER THAN HE LOOKS!
BLACKIE, ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO FRAME THAT PICTURE?
ARE YOU KIDDING? ANY RED-BLOODED BOY WOULD LIKE IT IN HIS ROOM!

From 1959 — ELLA CINDERS, ghosted by Rog.

tomorrow." His name was **Harry Oliver,** the recipient of the first award for art direction that was ever given in the Academy Awards, and what they had done was hired him to come down and reconstruct a town. And this is what we did — I did the drawings of the facades that were then given to an engineer and an architect, who would make them work. But that was my job, and I did costume research, I used to go to the library and do costume research, and anyway — and one of the guys that Harry brought down there with him was on the board of directors of Schenard Art Institute, and he was a **Disney** man. In those days, **Disney** was underwriting Schenard Art Institute, and that's where he was sending his animators to learn how to draw. I worked for this guy — I'm trying to think of this name — my God, I can't believe I've forgotten that guy's name — little fellow, finally gave up drawing entirely and committed suicide. Anyway, he was a tough little guy, he said, "You know something, Roger, I'll tell you something. You're pretty good, but I've gotta tell you something. All you punk kids, you think all you have to do is draw. You go back to school, and if you go back and finish school, you come and see me, and I'll get you a scholarship to Schenard." So I went back, finished high school, two years of college — I went nights — **Vern Caldwell** — I went to see Vern, and he said "Okay." So he gave me a two year scholarship to Schenard because he was on the board of directors.

SHEL: *Did you have to go part time?*

ROGER: I was going part time — I remember I used to hitchhike over from Sierra Madre to the old yellow car line. We had two — one that went east and west, and one that went north and south. One was the red cars, and one was the yellow cars. The yellow cars went to Yellow Rock to the beach and the others went the other way, up and down Southern California. I'd get on the old yellow car there at the end of the Rock Eagle run, and phunk down seven cents — it was a seven cent car line — and I would go to Seventh and Main and then I would transfer on to the red car and I'd take that out to Seventh and Alvarado and go to art school. And that's how I got there — seven cents it cost me. I remember it used to cost me a dime for lunch. Candy bars were three for a dime, so I'd buy three candy bars — a Hershey or an Oh Henry, but I always bought an Uno bar for dessert. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *We never had those in the midwest. They must have been strictly on the west coast. They're great. You can still get them today. Silver foil with blue lettering — U-N-O — a rectangle.*

ROGER: U-N-O, Uno bar. Let's see — hamburgers were a dime, milkshakes were a dime, so many times I would have a milkshake and a hamburger for dinner.

SHEL: *What kind of classes did you have? I don't want to hear about your lunch, I want to hear about your classes in art school.*

ROGER: I took design . . .

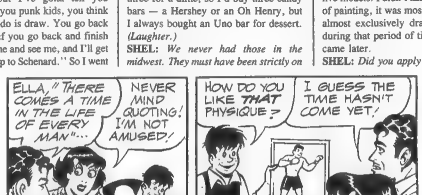
SHEL: *How did you learn to get to draw so fast and so well?*

ROGER: Hell, just came naturally, I guess. My design teacher was a guy named **Joe DeMars,** who illustrated for ESQUIRE magazine — he and **Fritz Willis** were two of a kind. **Fritz Willis** and **Joe DeMars** used to do a lot of illustrations for ESQUIRE. He was my design teacher. **Carl Beets,** who was an assistant to **Pruitt Carter** was my figure teacher — a strict anatomist, that's where I learned anatomy.

SHEL: *Did you draw from live models?*

ROGER: Oh, yeah. Always drew from live models. I didn't take much in the way of painting, it was mostly drawing. I did almost exclusively drawing and design during that period of time. The painting came later.

SHEL: *Did you apply any of the things*


ELLA, "THERE COMES A TIME IN THE LIFE OF EVERY MAN"...
NEVER MIND QUOTING! I'M NOT AMUSED!
HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT PHYSIQUE?
I GUESS THE TIME HASN'T COME YET!
FRED FOX 10-25
Tm. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.—All rights reserved
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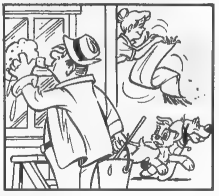
"The idea eventually emerged as a thing



you learned in the **Landon** *course as you were in art school?*

ROGER: I suppose you do unconsciously — sure.

SHEL: *So you had your art classes on top of the Landon course. If they were underwritten by Disney, I imagine they had a higher opinion of cartooning than most places.*

ROGER: When I was going there — that was before **Don Graham** came. Don was still over at the studio. **Don Graham,** who was a genius art teacher, and **Rico LeBrun.** But later, Walt decided to have everything over at the Schenard Institute so they went over there to teach. So I didn't study with Don the first time around, I studied with other people. Second time around, after the war when I went back to the G.I. bill, I had **Don Graham,** and he's the guy that developed some of the greatest animators — **George Baker,** who did the Sad Sack, says that the greatest art teacher he ever had was **Don Graham,** and he's right — **Graham** was unbelieveable. He couldn't draw terribly well himself — but my God, the ideas, the concepts that he could get across to you were unreal. So I had the good fortune to study with Don. I had **Rex Brant** as my watercolor teacher, and **Phil Dyke's** okay on it, and this is thirty-five years ago. Phil's out at Claremont now, he's an artist and professor emeritus out there — one of the big names. Anyway, I got out of all of that, and there wasn't any work — there was just no work.

SHEL: *Did you follow this thing through M-G-M? Did you go to M-G-M to see if this art director. . .*

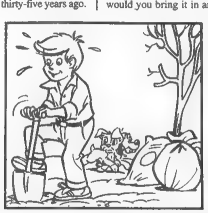
ROGER: I went to evey animation studio, and they all said, "No, we're not hiring." So I went to work for an organization called the Singer Sewing Machine Company. I was an office boy for about a year, which just about killed me — I can't believe how much work I did. Then I went on as a door-to-door salesman in the history of the Singer Sewing Machine Company. I sold two items. I carried a demonstrator with me, a sewing machine, and one day I was driving home and one of the girls I had gone to school with hailed me down and she said, "Hey, Roger! I hear you're working for Singer," and I said, "Yes, I am." Her name was **Enunciada Schultz,** which I think was a delight. She married a fellow named **Twedell,** so her name became **Enunciada Twedell.** *(Laughter.)* At any rate, she said, "Do you have one of those little sewing machines?" And I said, "I just happen to have one in the back of the car," and she said, "Well would you bring it in and show me how it works?" So I took it in, and I showed her how it works, and she said, "I think I'll buy it." I said, "That's fine." So I got the sales agreement, and that was my one sale on a sewing machine. I had great salesmanship, right?

SHEL: *Uh-huh.*

ROGER: And the other time — you see, at that time, Singer made irons and vacuumn cleaners, so one day, I was canvasing — going up and down the streets in Pasadena, and I rang the door, and this black lady came to the door, and she was obviously working for these people, and she was ironing, and she said, "I don't want no sewing machine, but by golly, if you had an iron, I'd buy it from you right now." I said, "Stand where you are, don't move an inch." I went and got an iron out of the car, and I brought it in, and that was my other sale. Those were my two sales, in something like nine months. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *You were an independent salesman — you didn't take orders from nobody.*

ROGER: That's for damn sure — nobody. Anyway, one day I got this note in my mail box. It was from the guy who was doing FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS at the time, and he said, "Call **Fred Fox** — **Fred Fox** is looking for an assistant."



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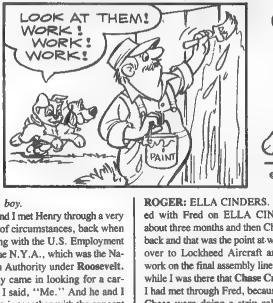
called THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES."



SHEL: *Oh, boy.*

ROGER: And I met Henry through a very peculiar set of circumstances, back when I was working with the U.S. Employment Service on the N.Y.A., which was the National Youth Authority under **Roosevelt.** This one guy came in looking for a cartoonist, and I said, "Me." And he and I had done a strip together with the concept — the idea eventually emerged as a thing called THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES — but it was way too early. We had these two old prospectors and their mule who hit money and then went to the big town. It was a very funny little strip, but we were never able to sell it. But in the process, I had met Henry. So Henry sent me to Fred, and Fred looked over my things and he said, "Okay, come to work."

SHEL: *Now at this point, where were Charles Plumm and Bill Councilman?*

ROGER: Bill at this time was dead, I do believe — Bill had died, and Charlie — the reason Fred needed an assistant was that Charles had to go into the hospital for an operation and he had dropped the strip into Fred's lap, and Fred didn't want to write and draw the whole thing, he wanted somebody to help him, so I went and helped him.

SHEL: *We're talking about ELLA CINDERS?*

ROGER: ELLA CINDERS. So I worked with Fred on ELLA CINDERS for about three months and then Charles came back and that was the point at which I went over to Lockheed Aircraft and went to work on the final assembly line, and it was while I was there that **Chase Craig,** whom I had met through Fred, because Fred and Chase were doing a strip called ODDS BODKINS, and I had met Chase one time — Chase came up to show Fred some samples — we went back to work. But Chase remembered me after all those months, called me at Lockheed — tracked me down and he said, "We're starting this new magazine out here called LOONEY TUNES AND MERRIE MELODIES. Are you interested in drawing for it?" And I said, "Hell, yes!"

SHEL: *This was in the early Forties. Chase was just at a CAPS meeting as a guest speaker — it was a lot of fun.*

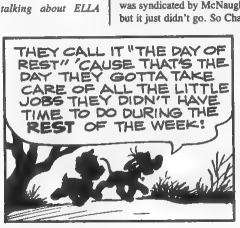
ROGER: Probably told as many lies as anybody is capable of telling. *(Laughter.)* Anyway, Chase at that time had just gone to work. He and **Colonel Bittner** had been working with a fellow named **Bergen — Edgar Bergen,** and they had been drawing a comic strip called CHARLIE McCARTHY, which had a short life. It was syndicated by McNaught Syndicate, but it just didn't go. So Chase had come to work for Western Publishing Company, and he and **Win Smith** had put out the first issue. **Win Smith** died, and they asked me to do Porky Pig. I had never seen him in an animated cartoon or anything. Chase made a very rough little drawing and said, "This is what he looks like," and this is what he sent me with the script. And on the basis of that, I drew Porky Pig — a ten page Porky Pig story, and I'll be damned if they didn't hire me, and I quit Lockhead Aircraft like that. And I was with Western all those years until I got sucked into the army, and when I got out I had the G.I. bill, so I went back to Schenard and I took another two years, and during that time I was deeply into painting and drawing. Then one day Fred called me and said, "Charlie's retired, do you want to do the strip?" "How much?" And he told me, and I went to work and spent the next ten or eleven years doing ELLA. Then along that time somewhere, Clifford died.

SHEL: *Clifford McBride, who did NAPOLEON?*

ROGER: **Clifford McBride**... and Margo, who was his widow, with whom I had gone to college.

SHEL: *But that's a totally different style from ELLA CINDERS.*

ROGER: Tell me. I changed hats in the middle of the week. You just change hats,


THEY CALL IT "THE DAY OF REST" 'CAUSE THAT'S THE DAY THEY GOTTA TAKE CARE OF ALL THE LITTLE JOBS THEY DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO DO DURING THE REST OF THE WEEK!
NOW I KNOW.
3-31
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Who's tougher than *WOLVERINE?*
More deadly than *ELEKTRA?*
More relentless than *RORSCHACH?*
And more psychotic than *BADGER?*

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They were wrong.

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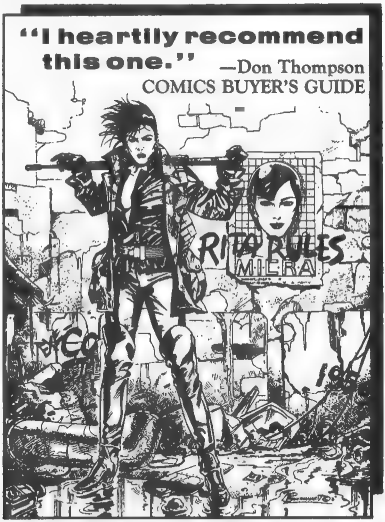

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"I want to kick his ass a little."

PUT SCAMP IN ONE OF THESE SMALL ANIMAL CAGES UNTIL I CAN GET TO HIM, MRS. STEINER.
YES, DOCTOR.
HEY!
DON'T I GET TO MAKE ONE PHONE CALL?
1-16

you know? I'd pick up NAPOLEON, I'd do NAPOLEON for three and a half days, and I did the other three and a half days on ELLA. That was a rough year — ten years. Well, I didn't do the two for ten years — I did NAPOLEON concurrently with ELLA for about three, and I threw in the towel — I said, "I can't do it." Then **Ed Nofziger** took over, and he changed the dog to an **Ed Nofziger** dog, and that didn't work. So from there we went to **Joe Maserly** who had been my assistant on ELLA — he tried it for a while — did a damn good job on it, and then it fell into the hands of **Foster Moore,** who I understand is currently doing it for the **Al Smith** syndicate.

SHEL: *I didn't know it was still going.*

ROGER: Well, he's been doing something with it, and I think it has a limited range of sales. I don't know whether he's still doing it or not. After that, they both died, and Joe called me one day and said, "Hey, they're looking for somebody to do a new comic strip called the FLINTSTONES over at **Hanna-Barbera,** do you want to do it?" So I went over and I talked to **Gene Hazelton,** and Gene hired me. Gene actually did . . . I did some of the drawing. Gene did most of it, and I inked it. I inked and lettered the whole damn thing for about two years, and that ended.

SHEL: *About what two years were these?*

ROGER: 1961-62, when it first started. In other words, it hadn't even gotten off the ground yet. I went on a trip to New York and I had the amusing experience of going into McNaught Syndicate, who was syndicating it, and I had a strip, and I was asked around if they were interested in the development of a new strip, and this lady at McNaught said, "We have one of the most wonderful things, I want to show you one of the most beautiful drawings, now you come here and I'll show you how drawings should be drawn." So she took me and showed me one of my FLINTSTONES Sunday pages. *(Laughter.)* I had to keep my mouth shut — you know, you can't blow the cover. Here I was, in New York, and I was sitting in a hotel room knocking these things out mailing them out to California so they could shoot them back to McNaught Syndicate. Silliest thing in the world. When I got back from that, Gene hit me with the news that he had decided to let me go. And so there I was, flat on my ass. That's when I started to do the I LOVE LUCY comic, and about that time, I became director of the museum, and a whole bunch of other stuff. So that's it.

SHEL: *And how did you get the job drawing SCAMP?*

ROGER: Ed Nofziger called me one day and said, "Hey," He and I have sort of given each other jobs, and he said, "They're looking for somebody to do SCAMP, and I told them if they ever wanted to have a real dog artist, you're it." I said, "Thanks a lot." *(Laughter.)* So I went in and talked to **Don McLaughlin** and he had all the fellows in — **Tom Galberg** and **Ron Schofield,** and they all sat around and looked at my samples and Don looked around at them, and they all looked away, and finally Don looked at me and he said, "Can you draw Mickey Mouse?" I said, "Absolutely not. I couldn't draw Mickey Mouse if my life depended on it." He said, "Good, you're hired." *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *They knew you'd be happy staying with SCAMP, is that it?*

ROGER: Whatever it was, it was just a joke on his part.

SHEL: *That's funny.*

ROGER: Anyway, that's six or seven years ago, and I've been doing it happily ever since. I've been teaching art at the Laguna Beach Art School for seventeen years.

SHEL: *And you uncovered a star — one of your pupils — the old ring. You want to tell me a little bit about Jim Smith?*

ROGER: Yeah. He came to class, and he was drawing these things and I saw his gags and they were unreal, they were so beautiful, and I said, "All you've got to do is clean up your drawing style and fix your lettering." So we went back and forth for a semester and I knew that he had it and I told him, "You try for United Features." So I called **Sarah Gillespie** and told her, "I'm sending this guy's work to you, and I want you to look at it." And she told me later, "If you hadn't called me, it was at the bottom of a stack, I would have gone right by it."

SHEL: *Then it does help to have a friend in court.*

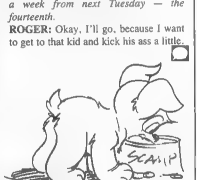
ROGER: You damn bet. They offered him a development contract — a thousand dollars, it wasn't much. In the meantime, the TIMES-MIRROR was courting him, and **Paul Conrad,** whith whom he had studied with one time when Paul was teaching up there, kept coming over to the airplane hanger where he was living and twisting his arm saying, "Why don't you sign with the TIMES-MIRROR?" So finally Jim did. Yeah, I think it'll work. I've got to get to that guy and tell him he's got to fix his lettering or hire somebody. It just isn't working — it isn't holding on the page. If I could get my mitts on that kid . . .

SHEL: *Come to the next CAPS meeting. He usually shows up there.*

ROGER: When's the next one?

SHEL: *Second Tuesday, which would be a week from next Tuesday — the fourteenth.*

ROGER: Okay, I'll go, because I want to get to that kid and kick his ass a little.



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"I became production manager in '81 and

RICHARD BRUNING & BOB ROZAKIS

it's been one uphill climb ever since."

The offices of DC Comics at 666 Fifth Avenue have been described in print before, but some things bear repeating. Most readers have seen the gradated dot pattern that runs behind the logo of Dick Giordano's "Meanwhile" columns — imagine walls covered in that pattern, in yellow. Imagine all the office nameplates designed as word balloons. Imagine a life-size figure of Clark Kent sitting in the reception area, reading that day's issue of the NEW YORK TIMES; and lastly, imagine a conference room with a fist, wearing at its wrist the blue color of Kent's alter ego, smashing through the wall. I am in that conference room now, to meet and converse with two of the men responsible for the recent resurgence of DC Comics. Richard Bruning is DC's art director and cover editor; Bob Rozakis is the production manager, as well as a writer of several series, notably the late, lamented 'MAZING MAN. I began the interview by asking for some background on both men.

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Let's ask each of you what your responsibilities and backgrounds are, starting with you, Richard. You're the art director. . .*

RICHARD BRUNING: . . Inclusive of that is cover editor, for the last six months, which works well together.

My background? Well, I learned to read from comics at the age of 4 and kept reading them. A tragic mistake, obviously. I always wanted to be a comic artist when I grew up, so I drew dozens of my own little comics as a kid. In later years, when I did grow up, I found it was very hard to make a living as a comic artist. Breaking in as an illustrator was very difficult. I tried doing more cartooning, which is also very difficult to sell but more fun to do. I created the Marvelous Fruits and veggies, which people still ask me about. (Sigh.) But ultimately I found myself doing graphic design work. People would say, "Oh, you're an artist, why don't you do me a logo?" Or an ad or a business card. . . I would say, "Well, it's not the same as what I want to do, but I'll give it a try." I did it, found I enjoyed it, and that I had a real affinity for type and design and how to communicate that way.

I also found it was a lot easier to get work. People always need business cards, and logos, and ads, and brochures, and fliers and publication design. The latter ultimately became my strongest interest in graphic design. I started a design studio, Abraxas Studio, back in 1979, which is still around today, although I don't own it any longer. We did everything from insurance brochures to album covers.

One of my first clients was Capital City Distribution, which was just starting up. I had known the owners, **Milton Griepp** and **John Davis**, prior to that, at another distributor where we all worked. When they started Capital City, I started working with them right away, designing their logo, ads, monthly order forms, brochures. A year or two later, we were approached by **Mike Baron**, who thought it would be a marvelous idea if Capital, like some other distributors (notably Pacific), were to get into publishing. So **John Davis** and **Milton Griepp** asked me if I'd be interested in forming a separate corporation to publish comics. And if I would be editor and art director. I said yes, foolheadedly, and we started Capital Comics, technically, Capital Publications, Inc. The first thing we did was NEXUS with **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude.** We did three issues of that in black-and-white, the last of which had the Flexi-disc record built into it. It did pretty well, well enough that we wanted to go to color comics. We decided to jump in with both feet and do full-process color comics right off the bat —Baxter format, deluxe books as we call them now, which was great for me, because I was able to integrate the design and the editorial look more cohesively. We came up with the most sophisticated package possible, that was still a superhero comic book. We did NEXUS in color for a year, then we started doing BADGER, and then about six months after

Richard helped design the look of North America's favorite burrowing mammal.

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"The comics industry is slowly but

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Richard Bruning
Position: Art Director, DC Comics Inc.
Credits: Design on DARK KNIGHT, WATCHMEN, THE SHADOW mini-series, many others; former editor of Capital Comics, including NEXUS, BADGER, and WHISPER.
Favorite Thing To Do In Montreal In The Middle Of The Night: The last time I was there they put me in the Motel Pierre, which had one of those beds with "vibrating fingers" — you know, pop a quarter in and BZZZZZZZZZ! I went through as many quarters as I had and then watched French-Canadian TV and couldn't figure out what they were talking about.

years — I'm originally from New York — to San Francisco for a change of environment and some rest and relaxation. I did some free-lance design work there, and after I was there for about nine months I got a call from DC, asking if I'd be interested in becoming their art director. **Neal Pozner**, who was a friend and with whom I'd formed a sort of mutual admiration society — we were the only two graphic designers in comics five years ago — had recommended me for the job. Both **Dick Giordano** and **Joe Orlando** were familiar with my work. They flew me in for an interview and we talked, and, outside of leaving San Francisco — a city I would have dearly loved to stay in — it was the best of all possible worlds for me. I preferred to work at DC over any other company at that point. And still do, as a matter of fact. I have a tremendous amount of creative freedom and fun here.

PAT: *Bob, you're the production manager, right?*

BOB ROZAKIS: Yeah, and the meanest guy in comics.

PAT: *What's your background?*

BOB: I started out as a child.

RICHARD: A mean child.

BOB: No, I was a very nice child. It wasn't until I got here that I became mean.

I've been reading comic books since I was five years old. I was **T.M. Maple** before **T.M. Maple** was invented. I wrote tons and tons of letters, had tons and tons of letters printed . . .

RICHARD: You didn't number them, though. That was your problem.

BOB: No, I never did. I never kept track of them that avidly. I ended up with a total of about 135 printed, which was the record at the time.

When I graduated from college, I came up here on a lark, just to visit **Julie Schwartz**, who treated me as if *I* were a big celebrity. They were all thinking, "Oh, there's that yoyo who wrote us all those letters." I had gotten a degree in accounting, but I didn't really want to be an accountant. I wanted to do something creative. If you get creative in accounting, they send you to jail.

I had done some freelance jobs for DC, crossword puzzles and the like, which were published in the TARZAN tabloid edition and such. So I asked **Sol Harrison** for a job and they gave me a job as a production assistant. The first thing they had me do was answer all the mail. They gave me a box like this *(spreads hands apart)* and I found my own letters in it.

This was just about the time that Sol had invented the Comicmobile. **Mike Uslan** had been driving it around his part of New Jersey, but he was going off to Indiana to get married, so Sol decided I was the next

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Bob Rozakis
Position: Production Manager, DC Comics Inc.
Credits: Writer, SUPERMAN, SUPERMAN — THE SECRET YEARS, ACTION, 'MAZING MAN, THE CENTURIONS; former assistant to Julie Schwartz; former driver of the DC Comicmobile.
Favorite Thing To Do When Stuck In Montreal In The Middle Of The Night: In the winter, you can watch the snow trucks go back and forth. I don't know where they take the snow, but trucks pass each other, fully laden, going in opposite directions. One guy is taking it away, the other is bringing it back — this is why they spend a million dollars a day on snow removal in Montreal.

that we began WHISPER — all of which did fairly well. NEXUS was certainly the most popular, as far as critical acclaim went.

Unfortunately we were a very small company, and we were under-capitalized, despite our name. Then "Black September" occurred three or so years ago — when the larger publishers, particularly Marvel, decided they did not want the competition of the smaller publishers, and put a lot of product out on the market all at once, especially a lot of reprint books in deluxe format.

That ate up a lot of dollars, because most of the retailers and wholesalers tend to first order their Marvels and DCs, and then order independents. It left them with very little money left over for the independents, so we saw a lot of the small companies go belly up at that time — Pacific and Capital were two of them.

We were able to sell all our properties to First Comics, which was good. If we could have sold them to anybody it would have been First because we thought that their set-up was the best — of all the independents they were prepared to hang around for a long term.

At that time I was pretty burned out on comics. For years, I'd been working seven days a week, 12 hours a day, between running ABRAXAS and Capital Comics. So I just took some time off from comics and most everything else. I moved from Madison, Wisconsin, where I'd been living for eight

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surely climbing into the 20th century."

logical choice to drive it, and I would get to drive it around on Long Island. Michael had an advantage that I didn't — in New Jersey, in the townships he was dealing with, he was able to go to the beaches, the parks, the schools, wherever the kids were. In Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, the townships *wouldn't* let me go to the beaches, the parks, the schools, or any place where the kids were. I was allowed to drive up and down the streets, like the Good Humor man, ringing my bell, and waiting for the kids to come running out and *not* buy a Creamsicle. *(Laughter.)* I had one kid who, every time I came down the block, came out with a nickel and wanted a Creamsicle, and ended up with an issue of PLOP.

RICHARD: That's close.

BOB: After the Comicmobile — which was either before its time, after its time, or during its time and its time never was — went the way of all things, I came back and worked as **Julie Schwartz's** assistant for three years. Then I moved into production as assistant production manager, in 1976, and became production manager in 1981, and it's all been one uphill climb ever since.

Basically, I think I got here just as the company and the whole comic-book industry were crawling out of the 19th Century. At this point, we're slowly but surely climbing into the 20th.

PAT: *Let's take it from that point, then. If the comic-book industry, at least as far as its printing and production and art direction, is finally getting out of the 19th Century and getting into the 20th, in the last fifteen years of that century, what techniques that DC is using now represent that change? What are some of the production techniques that have been introduced?*

BOB: The biggest one is offset printing. Comic books have been letterpress printed since their inception. They are one of the few things that are still letterpress printed, and CAMELOT 3000 was the first thing we did on offset — with a higher quality paper.

Then we started doing some process separations, some of which were abysmal. We did a couple of annual covers. The LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES ANNUAL #1, 1982, was the first one that I was involved with, and it was just — we could have done it better with hand-seps than with process separations. It just wasn't worth it.

But getting into things like RONIN, where we did full-process separations and from there to DARK KNIGHT, and various posters...

PAT: *Graphic novels...*

BOB: Right. All that is 20th Century.

PAT: *I work in publishing, so I know what the difference between letterpress and offset is. We don't have to go into heavy detail on it, but for some of the readers who are not familiar with it, why don't you explain the difference?*

"CAMELOT 3000 was the first thing we did on offset."

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SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #20 **Behind the iron curtain, the Knights get into their new role as undercover superheroes! Don't miss this one!**

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"We use offset on VIGILANTE, WATCHMEN..."

RICHARD: Give'em the five-cent version.

PAT: *That's right.*

BOB: Basically, letterpress printing — you have a plate that presses on a piece of paper, physically. Like a rubber stamp...

RICHARD: A rubber stamp is the best example... and you can tell by the printing when you look at it. It has uneven edges....

BOB: Which is why it looks smudgy, because you're taking this metal plate and squooshing it down on the paper.

PAT: *If the paper or the plate slips, you have a problem.*

BOB: Also, the more porous the paper, like newsprint, the more the ink will spread as it's forced in there, and the drabber the color will become. When you get onto higher quality paper — you can see the difference between Mando and regular newsprint. It doesn't soak in as much, it doesn't spread the ink around.

RICHARD: The ink rides the surface of the paper, rather than being absorbed like a sponge.

BOB: In offset printing, you don't have that physical contact between the plate and paper. In between is a rubber blanket, the ink is put on the plate, it goes onto the blanket, and the rubber blanket comes in contact with the paper. You don't have that forcing of the plate into the paper, over and over again.

The letterpress plates used to be made of zinc, and the metal stood up very well. In the early '70s they introduced plastic polymer plates, and everybody got up in arms. The artists were complaining because the lines would get wiggly, the finer lines would disappear. The plastic would actually break off, because of that constant pressure... around and around and around, and the press is running at a speed faster than you would believe...

PAT: *For 300- or 400,000 copies...*

BOB: Well, they change the plates a little more often than that, but not too much. Anyway, the plastic would just start to disintegrate.

With offset you don't have that problem, because you don't have that wear and tear on the plate constantly.

PAT: *So, to the reader, the important thing is that the art and color looks much cleaner and brighter.*

BOB: I think the easiest way for a reader to see the differences is that on a letterpress book you use a 65-line screen — that means they can get 65 dots in an inch. On an offset book, you can go up to 133-line screen. Obviously, if you're going to get dots that are half the size. The dots aren't as noticeable. They print much more cleanly in offset, because you don't have that ramming into the paper *(hits hand into fist)*. So the printing has a much cleaner look.

PAT: *These days you're using the offset printing on major projects like DARK KNIGHT...*

RICHARD: All the graphic novels...

BOB: Plus all the deluxe line...

PAT: *VIGILANTE, OUTSIDERS, LEGION, TITANS, WATCHMEN, right now.*

RICHARD: There's about eight of them right now, and the QUESTION series will be offset as well.

BOB: Plus we have just invented a whole new format, which will be offset printing done on Mando paper, printed at

HERE COMES CITY!
KA-BOOM!
YEAH, THAT WAS SOME KIND OF A CONCUSSION!
C'MON, LET'S GRAB A COUPLE OF BEERS BEFORE WE HIT THE ROAD
RIGHT ON!
ALRIGHT! THE SLIDE, PRETTY!
...AND GET YOUR SAINTS ON THE ROAD! YOU ALL GONNA BE HITTIN' IT A LOT SOONER THAN YOU THINK!
DON'T MAKE NO DIFFERENCE DO
HAR HAR!

A free YES-PRIZE will be awarded to the first reader who spots the name of one of COMICS INTERVIEW'S illustrious staff members hidden in this page from VIGILANTE #20, by Tod Smith, Paul Kupperberg and Rick Magyar.

LONG AS WE GET TO SMASH SOME PANSY BUTTS!
YEAH! WE'LL SHOW 'EM WE DON'T LIVE IN ONE A THEM FANCY SUBURBAN KIND LITTERIN' UP OUR TURF!
HERE'S MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM...PLUS!

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"We invented a new format for SPECTRE."

The Spectre

Ronald's. The first book in that series will be the SPECTRE. By the end of 1987, we hope to have seven or eight books in that format.

RICHARD: The new format books were a way to increase the quality, beyond the cheap letterpress process, without going to the $1.50 price. That's a big jump, from 75¢ to $1.50. We found a way to do it at a dollar, which gives us a much finer printing, on better enough paper that you'll notice the difference. We also increased the number of editorial pages a bit.

PAT: *When you first started working in offset, what were some of the problems that were presented? You said the first thing done that way was CAMELOT 3000?*

BOB: The biggest problem was probably the mentality of dealing with the separators.

We've got to backtrack a little here. Hand separations are just that — done by hand. A person has beside him a color scheme done by a colorist, and nine pieces of identical acetate with the blackline artwork on it. They have to interpret every color that the colorist has put down into tones of red, yellow, and blue. We have our own bizarre little system, where R2 is 25 percent red, and B3 is 50 percent blue, and Y is 100 percent yellow, etc. So if you've got a brown that is YR3B2, on three different pieces of acetate, the separator takes red opaque and paints in the area that is YR3B2 on the yellow 100 percent one, the red 50 percent one, and the blue 25 percent one. Sometimes they get a little sloppy — if they know there's a big black area they can slop over, because the black will cover it up and on newsprint with letterpress printing, no one will ever notice it. On offset printing, it would be noticed immediately that there were colors popping out of the black areas.

There was an early issue of OMEGA MEN, I think, with a solid black panel, and in the middle of it were two blobs of red. The separator doing the page had used that black panel to clean some of the extra opaque off his or her brush...

RICHARD: Figuring it would never show.

BOB: On the offset printing, it looks like there's two little red eyes popping out of this supposedly completely black panel.

RICHARD: The other problem was that the colorists and the separators were used to laying down colors much heavier, because the letterpress process and paper would absorb that color, so it wouldn't be so strong. You put it on as heavy on white offset paper and those colors just scream at you.

PAT: *I remember in the early issues of CAMELOT 3000, there were letters from readers saying the colors were awfully garish for the effect being attempted. That's because the colorist was used to*

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"The cover is actually the first panel."

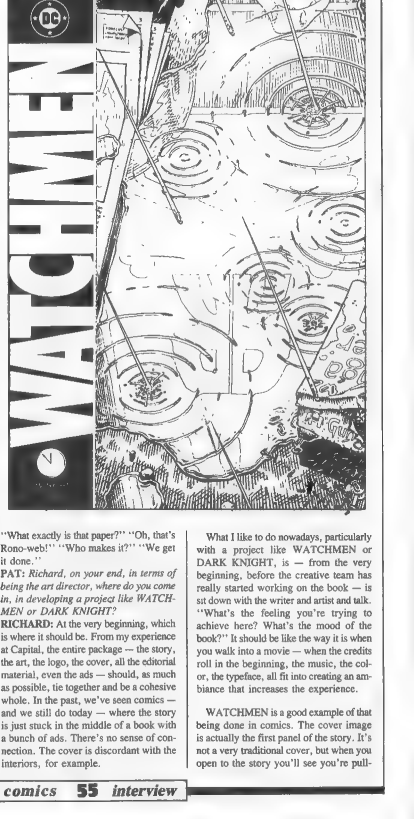
© 1987 DC Comics Inc.

working with letterpress, where the colors might be 25 or 30 percent less bright.
BOB: The colorists adapted as quickly as they could. **Tatjana Wood** was, I think, the first to really make the effort. As soon as she saw the first issue of CAMELOT 3000, she said, "Oh, my God..." and immediately started toning things down. She said, "I was using a 50 percent yellow, figuring you would barely see it," because that's what happens in letterpress. "I can tone everything down now," she said. If you use a 25 percent yellow in letterpress, you don't even know it's there.
PAT: *So, now your colorists have to be aware of which printing process is going to be used on any book they work on.*
BOB: Right. We also added a 70 percent tone to the three colors in the offset books. Tatjana uses it quite extensively. On ELECTRIC WARRIOR, **Tom Ziuko** has eliminated the solids. If you look at ELECTRIC WARRIOR, there are no 100 percent colors in there — it's all done with 25s, 50s, and 70s. That's what gives it its muted look. Had he used solids, this thing would glow in the dark.

I guess it was **Frank Miller** who started talking about paper. When we started doing RONIN, we went to an even heavier stock. The regular offset books are done on a 45 pound Baxter; RONIN was done on a 60 pound stock. We were looking around for a different paper and someone suggested a high-gloss magazine look, and Frank didn't want that. He eventually found a paper that was manufactured in France, that the people at Ronald's had to duplicate. They managed to find an equivalent here in North America. We had a running gag about the kinds of paper we were going to print RONIN on. Americomics, the small independent publisher from Florida, prints on a high-gloss paper, and the colors just glow in the dark. We started calling that paper "Reflecto-web." Paper you didn't need a flashlight to read under your blanket in bed at night.

So, every time we ran into paper problems, I'd call Frank and say, "Listen, Frank, we're out of "Rono-web" (which is the name we gave to the paper we finally chose), we're gonna have to use Reflecto-web." And he'd go, "Augghh!" *(Laughter.)* We actually had three different variations on "Rono-web", and the last one we've also used for DARK KNIGHT, the graphic novels, and two or three other things. And it all basically grew out of RONIN — which paper we liked the best, and which gave us the reproduction we wanted.

We've had calls from people asking, "What exactly is that paper?" "Oh, that's Rono-web!" "Who makes it?" "We get it done."



PAT: *Richard, on your end, in terms of being the art director, where do you come in, in developing a project like WATCHMEN or DARK KNIGHT?*
RICHARD: At the very beginning, which is where it should be. From my experience at Capital, the entire package — the story, the art, the logo, the cover, all the editorial material, even the ads — should, as much as possible, tie together and be a cohesive whole. In the past, we've seen comics — and we still do today — where the story is just stuck in the middle of a book with a bunch of ads. There's no sense of connection. The cover is discordant with the interiors, for example.

What I like to do nowadays, particularly with a project like WATCHMEN or DARK KNIGHT, is — from the very beginning, before the creative team has really started working on the book — is sit down with the writer and artist and talk. "What's the feeling you're trying to achieve here? What's the mood of the book?" It should be like the way it is when you walk into a movie — when the credits roll in the beginning, the music, the color, the typeface, all fit into creating an ambiance that increases the experience.

WATCHMEN is a good example of that being done in comics. The cover image is actually the first panel of the story. It's not a very traditional cover, but when you open to the story you'll see you're pull-

"We developed a separate cover look

ing back from that cover image. The type face was chosen, so that throughout the book we would use a typeface that fit the mood of the book. The coloring was taken into consideration — "Should this have full-process or hand-separated color?"

The same thing happened with DARK KNIGHT. The title pages made you feel as if you were sitting in a movie theater, and the curtain was going down — there was no color on the inside front cover . . .

So, a lot of it is just to integrate the total editorial package better, so that ultimately the experience is more involving to the reader. I think that's what you have to do to make it worthwhile, putting out a book that costs $2.95 or $3.95, even $1.50. You should put a little more thought process into it, rather than just sticking some guy's story between two covers and throwing it out to the reader.

PAT: *How about on the standard line? How much input do you have there, say when they're starting a new series?*

RICHARD: Not as much. First of all, there are too many titles. It would be simply physically impossible for one person to be that involved in forty titles a month.

BOB: Oh, come on, you live in the office . . .

RICHARD: You're not supposed to tell people about that . . .

BOB: He takes his showers out on the ledge when it rains.

RICHARD: Very refreshing in the springtime. So, I work long hours. On a month-to-month basis, I do approve of cover sketches, final art, and cover copy. When we start a new book, I often talk to the editor, artist, and writer about logos, or cover formats that we may want to establish. Particularly on a mini-series. On THE SHADOW, I was able to ask **Howard Chaykin**, "Okay what do you want here?" We discuss logos, formats, typefaces. I investigated old SHADOW pulp magazines to develop a mixture of the new and the old, to try and get a *nouveau* pulp look. On a mini-series, it's easy to do something more unusual — you know if you're only going to do four issues, you can get away with tricky covers. On a regular, ongoing, letterpress title, if you get yourself into a gimmicky cover, 12 months down the line, you're really going to be shooting yourself. So, you make the look a little simpler.

Plus, because we use standard ad flats

Frank Miller's RONIN grand slam.

and typeface for 'Batman — Year One.'''

— ad placement — in our letterpress books, you can't get too fancy with interior-page layouts. But, if the creative team is trying to do a sort-of ''mini-series within a series'' — which we're doing more of right now — such as ''Batman — Year One'' in BATMAN, we'll develop a separate cover look for it, maybe use a special typeface inside to make it look more book-like.

There's varying degrees. I get less involved with the letterpress books, more so with the deluxe, offset titles. I try to give them a separate look. And on the graphic novels and special projects, I get very involved.

BOB: The amount of Richard's involvement on the letterpress books is, in part, a measure of the amount of interest the creative people show. Obviously, if you've got an artist or a writer who comes in and says, ''Listen, I want to do this in my book; I want to make it better. How can I get away with it? How can we make it work?'' we're much more likely to get involved. We both have too much work to do already to go knocking on doors, saying, ''Hey, we've got a great idea on how you can make the next issue of BLUE BEETLE really great.''

But, if somebody involved with the book comes to us — **David Mazzucchelli** has been coming in regularly on ''Batman — Year One'' asking questions — we'll bend over backwards 'til our heads touch the floor to try to make things work.

We've come up with some pretty strange things. The foldout at the end of RONIN #6 was basically **Frank Miller, Lynn Varley,** and **Bob Spivak**, who was then with Ronald's. We were all sitting up there in Montreal while we were printing #4, and Frank said, ''You know, I'd really like to get a foldout into #6.'' And I'm sitting there thinking about budgets, going, ''Mmm-hmmm . . .'' And **Spivak** says, ''Yeah, I think we can do that!'' And I'm still thinking, ''Okay, *now* what do I do?''

PAT: *Who do you have to clear something like that with, in terms of the cost?*

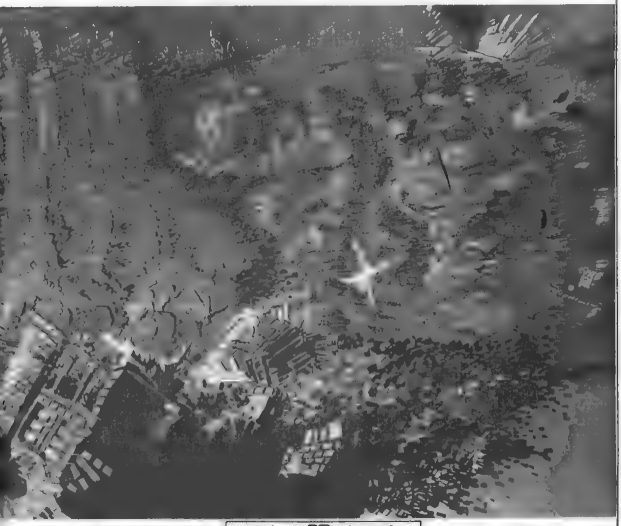
BOB AND RICHARD: *(nearly in unison)* **Paul Levitz.**

BOB: ''Paul — guess what?''

RICHARD: Paul's pretty good. If you can present a reasonable argument for why you want to do something like that, and it's anywhere within the budget . . .

BOB: A lot of it, too, is working with the Ronald's people. They came up with the way to get it to work. And I think it paid off. The way they did that nuclear explosion, and the way they worked the fold, so it just went BOOM! right out of the book.

RICHARD: They're really great, because they try to get involved in the editorial material, and then try to say, ''Well, what can we do that would emphasize that?''



"SWAMP THING's switching to a new format."

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It's nice to go to someone that just doesn't say, "Okay, give me the job and you'll get it back Thursday." They really babysit the job all the way through. They may not be the cheapest in the business, but they're probably the best.

BOB: The original plan with this whole new format was to do it at Sparta, but I went to Paul and said, "Listen, I think we're better off going to Ronald's, and seeing what they can do." And he said, "Well, if you can work out the pricing, it works for us." And that's what I ended up doing.

I sat down with **Angelo Messina,** who's now the accounts manager there, and said, "Look, here's what we want to do, here's how many we're going to do by the end of the year . . ." and we worked out the paper, the format, the whole technique.

PAT: *Is this new format going to be basically for new titles only, or will some existing titles switch over?*

BOB: It'll be basically new titles.

RICHARD: It's primarily for the direct-only titles.

BOB: It will be direct-only titles, but virtually all new series. Maybe we'll do the 'MAZING MAN SPECIAL on it.

RICHARD: Ooooo . . .

BOB: Let's hope. 'MAZING MAN SPECIAL . . .

RICHARD: Don't forget that one, kids.

PAT: *I'll get to that later. One of the things I've noticed over the last several years, on some of the major projects, starting with CAMELOT 3000, through RONIN, and DARK KNIGHT, have been some major scheduling problems. How does that affect what you do as production manager, Bob?*

RICHARD: Let's count the hairs on his head.

BOB: You took some pictures of me as I am now; I'll give you a picture of me ten years ago, and we'll see how much more hair was on my head.

I was on a plane coming back from Montreal with **Dick Giordano** and **Marv Wolfman** one time. There had been a sales meeting up there. The three of us were talking about scheduling on NEW TEEN TITANS. And as we're talking about it, and Marv is explaining, "Well, I'm running a little late here, and **George Perez** is running a little late there, da-da, da-da, da-da," we looked down and on my little tray table there are hairs, fallen out of my head. And Dick looked at me and said, "They really do fall out!" And I said, "Oh yeah. You guys start talking about schedules and my *hair* falls out!" Based on the way it's going, I'm going to be totally bald by the time I'm 40.

PAT: *You're going to look like* **Julie Schwartz.**

BOB: Ooooo . . .Scheduling problems: obviously, it's more difficult to get separa-

"DARK KNIGHT had everything go wrong."

tions done when they're process seps; it's more difficult to get the printing done when it's offset, and you're dealing with a company that uses their presses for more than printing comic books. In Sparta, "Oh well, this film is going to be late — well, they'll print the book tomorrow; they've got 27 other comic books to put on the press." At Ronald's, the timing is a little more rigid — particularly when we started working with them. Now, they're printing quite a few books, so they've got a little leeway. Somehow they always manage to print ours in the middle of the night...

At the beginning it was a real problem. If they were scheduled to print your two comic books on Thursday, and you didn't have the film there on Thursday, they might be able to print something else in their place, but they might not get you back on the press until the *next* Thursday.

PAT: *Have you, as production manager, suggested anything to help avoid these problems?*

BOB: All the time...

RICHARD: But we don't listen to him...

BOB: I sit in planning schedule meetings, and they say that artist X — and I'm not going to name names — is going to do three books a month, and he says he can do it, so we're going to schedule them. And I just sit there and say, "Are you kidding?" This is a person who hasn't delivered one book a month in the past year — and we're going to schedule three of them!" And I just know, as the hair is falling down on the table, that we're going to have problems.

Basically, we just do the best we can. The production department gets no credit — they're the unsung heroes, in many cases — for what I've begun calling the "in-by-nine, out-by-five service." The art comes in at nine o'clock in the morning, and by five that night it's on the way to the separator.

PAT: *You start to feel like you're the equivalent of the one-hour cleaners?*

BOB: Yeah, definitely. It's gotten to the point now where the art comes in at noon and goes out at three. You get four different people working on it at the same time, railroading through pages. I call up the separator to twist arms — "Yeah, you say you need five days, but do it in four." It comes right down to this: **Murphy Anderson** does the seps on most of our offset books, and the courier plane that takes the film to Ronald's in Montreal leaves from Teterboro Airport in New Jersey. Murphy frequently drives from his place in Jersey to the airport to meet this plane at 11 o'clock at night; we call it the "Casablanca Run," because he goes there in the middle of the night to deliver "the film."

Someday, the FBI is going to swoop down and arrest everyone at the plane — "What are they sending in the middle of the night in this plain brown wrapper?" *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *"Round up all the usual suspects."*

BOB: Right. But it gets down to that point where the film has to be in Montreal the next morning, because it's going on press.

RICHARD: Bob will do anything humanly possible to get that book to ship on time. What you have to take into account is that we'll all sit here and scream, "We don't want to sacrifice anything or make the book look shitty, just to be able to get it out on time." You have to constantly do that delicate dance.

People say, "Why do you even bother to schedule a book if it's not done yet?" There's a dilemna: if you don't schedule it...

RICHARD AND BOB: *(In unison)* ...they'll never get it done!

RICHARD: Many of the creative people are like that — and I could name names here, too. The shame of it is, **Frank Miller** would put the rest of his life into a project like DARK KNIGHT if we let him, because he wants it to be that good. But, as the publisher, you want it to come out someday relatively soon. Certainly the readers do! So, he'll just keep working on it; and Lynn will just keep working those pages over until they jump right off the paper...

BOB: The stuff, when it comes in, is just beautiful. "Wow! This is great..."

RICHARD: "Quick! Get it out the door!"

BOB: There it goes! "Hello separator. The pages are in, come and get them." People will come into production and say, "I heard the DARK KNIGHT pages are in. Can I see them?" "Sorry, they're gone."

PAT: *That's part of what I want to get at. Obviously, Bob, you must have made suggestions such as "don't put a four-issue mini-series on the schedule until two issues are in-house."*

BOB: We *did*, at the time. *(Laughter.)*

RICHARD: But, then there's three and four...

BOB: DARK KNIGHT is one of those projects that, in every way, had everything that possibly could go wrong, go wrong.

For those of you who enjoyed playing "what's wrong with this panel?" in DARK KNIGHT, tune in next month when Bob and Richard blow the lid on "Dark Knightmare."

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Welcome to the Fantagraphics

ADVENTURES OF CAPT. JACK

Adventures of Captain Jack #1: Premiere issue! Beatniks, lava lamps, cosmic pinball, and other funny stuff.

Adventures of Captain Jack #2: "Another Saturday Night" Part 1: Herman dies, Adam finds a soulmate.

Adventures of Captain Jack #3: Part 2 of "Sat. Night": Herman and Beezlebub visit the netherworld.

Adventures of Captain Jack #4: Maniacal astronauts and more.

Adventures of Captain Jack #5: "Farmer Fred, I'm In Love With Your Daughter" Part 1: Arrival on Janet's planet.

Adventures of Captain Jack #6: Part 2 Herman and Janet decide to go away together.

Adventures of Captain Jack #7: Part 3: Beezlebub intrudes in Herman and Janet's relationship.

Adventures of Captain Jack #8: Pool hustling and more.

CRITTERS

Critters #4: *Gnuff* and *Birthright* continue, *Lionheart* premieres, and the first Ken Macklin cover painting!

Critters #5: *Birthright* continues, the first *Gnuff* novel concludes (with a cover), plus Stan Sakai's *Nilson Groundthumper!*

Critters #6: *Usagi Yojimbo* tale with cover, *Birthright* concludes, and the first *Firecracker Jack* by Mark Armstrong!

Critters #7: Gnuff returns in *Animal Graffiti*, Usagi Yojimbo, and *De Grand We-Zoo* by Sam Kieth!

Critters #8: *Jack Bunny* by cover artist Mark Armstrong, Templeton Kelly tribute, and *Lionheart* begins.

Critters #9: Hallowe'en issue with Gnuff behind a mask, Lionheart's nightmare, and Dog Boy.

Critters #10: *Usagi Yojimbo* cover and story, plus the continuations of *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters #11: Special Christmas issue, featuring the conclusions of *Usagi Yojimbo*, *Gnuff*, and *Lionheart*, plus work by Mike Kazaleh, J. Holland and Ron Wilber, Mark Armstrong, Ty Templeton, Sam Kieth, Steve Lafler, and Ken Macklin. 68 pages!

Critters #12: *Birthright* returns, with a cover by Gallacci, plus Reed Waller and Kate Worley, and Sam Kieth!

Critters #13: *Gnuff* cover and 16-page chapter, plus *Birthright*, *Surfin' Neanderthals* by Mark Armstrong.

Critters #14: *Usagi Yojimbo* story and cover, plus *Birthright* and *Gnuff* continue.

Critters #15: *The Blue Beagle* and *Fission Chicken* both debut, and *Birthright* races on!

DOG BOY

Dog Boy #1: Journey off into surreal experiences with "Werewolf Bikers" and more!

Dog Boy #2: Sir Isaac Newton guest stars as reality unravels.

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Dog Boy #4: Dog Boy goes to Hell, plus Dog Girl invades the White House. Guest starring Reagan!

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Hugo #1: Milton (*Midnite*) Knight's feline "Meets the Baron."

Hugo #2: Hugo becomes a cartoonist and gets into deep trouble.

Hugo #3: Hugo is abducted by mermaids and fights sharks.

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Myron Moose Funnies #1: Lots of goofy snot jokes, plus parodies of Dr. Seuss and Uncle Wriggly books.

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Usagi Yojimbo #1: Usagi journeys back to his youth and tells how he became a samurai. Plus: Fujitake!

Usagi Yojimbo #2: Usagi goes into training and has his first duel. Plus: A new strip by Dave Thorne.

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The Beast Is Dead: Magnificent 1945 French graphic novel chronicling World War II as fought by animals. Stunning full-color work; hardcover!

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MAGAZINES

Amazing Heroes #8: Behind the scenes of DC's *Captain Carrot* comic with Scott Shaw! and Roy Thomas. Plus a funny-animal pictorial.

Amazing Heroes #42: Funny-animal issue with Joshua Quagmire cover and interview. Plus: Arn Saba on Neil the Horse and Dave Sim on Cerebus!

Amazing Heroes #111: Ty Templeton (of *Critters*) interviewed. It's funny.

The Comics Journal #73: Carl Barks featured, with long retrospective.

The Comics Journal #81-82: Mammoth interview with Dave (*Cerebus the Aardvark*) Sim.

The Comics Journal #99: Long interview with Arn (*Neil the Horse*) Saba.

OTHER STUFF

Anything Goes #2: Classic Alan Moore/Donald Simpson strip about death of comics includes several pages of Mike Kazaleh funny-animal characters. Plus Sam Kieth!

Anything Goes #3: Featuring a full-color Captain Jack story by Mike Kazaleh, Cerebus vignette by Dave Sim, and Cerebus cover by Neal Adams.

Doomsday Squad #3: Full-color Usagi Yojimbo back-up by Sakai.

Doomsday Squad #5: Full-color Captain Jack back-up by Kazaleh.

NEMO #21: 28 pages of Jack Kent's classic *King Aroo* strip—a treat for classic funny-animal lovers!

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LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

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SUPERMAN STAMP STILL NOT LICKED!

Dear Mr. Kraft:

As you and thousands of other comic fans are aware, next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the first appearance of Superman in ACTION COMICS. This is a landmark occasion, because this character started the trend that is the foundation of modern comics. I wouldn't doubt that DC have a lot of things planned to celebrate. But what I would like to see, something that would make the occasion very special and memorable, would be if the Post Office would issue a commemorative stamp to honor this great occasion. Since his first appearance in 1938, Superman has made a mark in every medium, from comic magazines to comic strips, cartoons, radio, television, and movies. He's an American institution.

This could be accomplished by a massive letter-writing campaign. Please ask your readers to write to the postmaster general (you can find his name in the latest World Almanac), 475 L'Enfant Plaza West SW, Washington DC 20260, and tell him we want to see a Superman commemorative stamp. If enough people write in, we just might get our wish.

Rene Blansette
R. 1 Notch Lick Rd.
Carrollton, KY 41008

MOEBIUS

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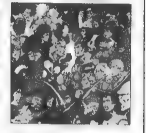

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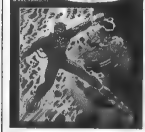

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#8-$3.00 **Mike Baron** and **Steve Grant** discuss NEXUS, WHISPER and BADGER — **Bill Griffith** talks about ZIPPY THE PINHEAD — **Richard Burton** on British comics — plus more! Cover by **Steve Rude.**

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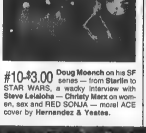

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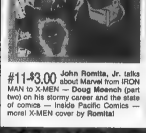

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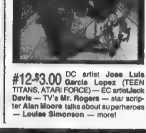

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RARE PHOTOS AMUSING

Dear COMICS INTERVIEW,

From the cover-featured exclamation point after his name to the end of the actual interview, I really enjoyed your **Jack Kirby** chat (#41.)

True, I wish the talk had been more appropriately "King" sized, but if somewhat brief (for my taste, that is), it was none-the-less entertaining. Thanks for the rare photos, too especially the amusing **Kirby** in uniform. Up 'till now I figured he spent World War II looking like Sgt. Fury, only messier.

I'd have preferred the accompaning art a bit more rare, perhaps a few quick pencil sketches of his more famous creations (rounded off to the nearest thousand). Maybe next interview, *OK*? (You don't want to overdo it, so don't schedule any new **Kirby** talks too much sooner than #43).

Joe Frank
4425 N. 78th St. #260-B
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

INTERVIEW ADDENDUM

Dear David,

The only correction I see needed was the caption under the initial photo of me with the PLAYBOY collage. It was on display at the Los Angeles and Phoenix clubs, not Chicago. That photo, by the way, was taken back in 1981.

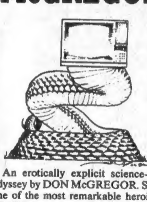
Last year, I did another 3D for **Bernie Wrightson** based on a 2-page spread from HOOKY. He promises to do his version of the Joker in exchange. I also did several more 3Ds for **John Byrne, Dan Jurgens, Jerry Ordway, Dan Mishkin, R.J.M. Lecifer, Roy Thomas,** and **Dr. Ron Silverstein.** Unfortunately, after doing one 3D a week for four months, I got a bit burned out and needed to take a few months off to work on other projects I'm involved with.

If anyone is interested in getting a hold of me, please feel free to give them my address.

By the way, I don't have time to read all the comics I buy, but X-TRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING THIEVES is one of my favorites.

Todd R. Reis
6785 W. 19th Place #301
Lakewood, CO 80214

SIMONSON & McGREGOR



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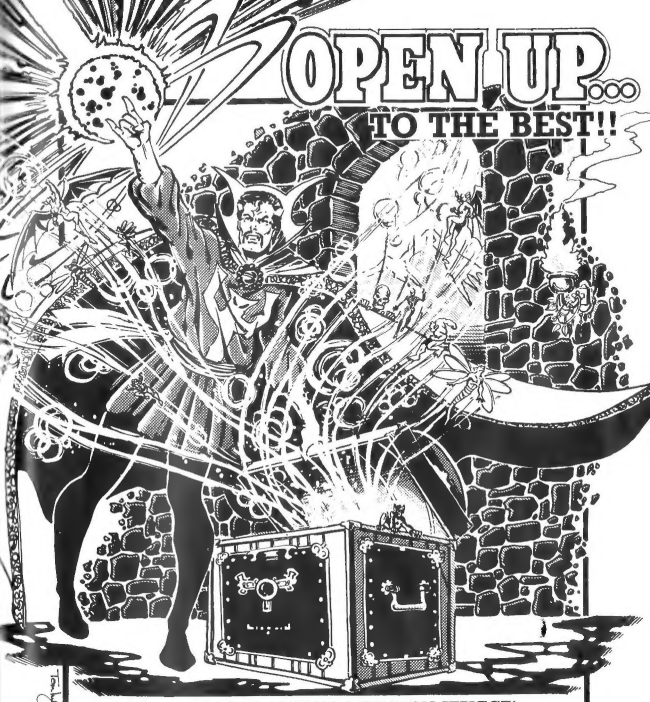
NEXT ISSUE: Acclaimed X-MEN and GUMBY artist, ART ADAMS, in a rare, rip-snortin' interview — plus art galore, including a colorful cover! Design demons BRUNING & ROZAKIS drop the axe on DARK KNIGHT in part two! Lots more awaits in store for comics connoisseurs in COMICS INTERVIEW #46 — as ever, first choice of industry intelligentsia!



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